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THE MIDDLE EASTERN QUESTION OR SOME POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF INDIAN DEFENCE

CAMPING IN A GORGE OF THE KARUN RIVER,
SOUTHERN PERSIA (p. 143)

Frontispiece

THE MIDDLE EASTERN QUESTION OR SOME POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF INDIAN DEFENCE

BY VALENTINE CHIROL

AUTHOR OF "THE FAR EASTERN QUESTION"

WITH MAPS, ILLUSTRATIONS, AND APPENDICES

LONDON

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ON RECORD

PREFACE

THIS volume has grown out of a series of letters written for *The Times*, to whose proprietors I am indebted for permission to make the fullest use of them, during a journey I made through Persia and down the Persian Gulf, as well as to different points of the Indian frontier, in the autumn and winter of 1902-3, before and after attending the Coronation Durbar at Delhi. In order to place before my readers a more complete survey of the question which I had outlined in those letters, I have not merely revised them and brought them, as far as possible, up to date, but I have, to some extent, recast them, and introduced a large amount of altogether new material.

I must leave these pages to speak for themselves; but as the book I published early in 1896 on *The Far Eastern Question* was, I think, the first to call public attention to the gravity of the problems with which, as the result of the war between China and Japan, we were about to be confronted in Eastern Asia, I may perhaps, without too much presumption, be allowed to say that the more subtle changes of which I have attempted to describe the progress in Middle Asia appear to me to be fraught with consequences of even greater moment to the British Empire.

In Persia especially—where I had travelled eighteen years before, on my way back from a journey to India—it was sufficient to compare the conditions that prevailed there in 1884 and in 1902 in order to be impressed with the rapidity with which events are now

moving even in the immutable East. Under the impact of Western forces the disintegration of Asia is proceeding apace, and new conditions are being evolved which, within a period perhaps no longer very remote, will seriously affect, both directly and indirectly, the position of our Indian Empire. For the pressure of European ambitions successively transferred from the already overcrowded stage of our own small continent to the more spacious stage of Asia is destined to rob India of the precious advantages of a *quasi*-insular position she has hitherto derived from the survival, all along her land frontiers, of decadent Oriental states, incapable of any serious aggressive effort, and thus to draw her more and more into the forefront of international politics. I hope I may have done something to convince the reader that issues are involved therein of which we, as a nation, can least of all afford to overlook or to underrate the importance.

I have collected in an Appendix some of the most important international treaties and extracts from official correspondence bearing on the subject. The Royal Geographical Society have been good enough to allow me to use one of their maps of Persia and adjoining regions, and I must crave the indulgence of the reader in the few cases in which the spelling of geographical names in the text diverges from that of the maps. The illustrations are taken from water-colour sketches which I made during my journey, or from photographs mostly taken by my travelling companion, Mr. Murray Stewart, who has kindly placed them at my disposal.

VALENTINE CHIROL.

QUEEN ANNE'S MANSIONS, S.W.
October 1, 1903.

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THE MIDDLE EASTERN QUESTION

CHAPTER I

THE MIDDLE EASTERN QUESTION DEFINED

AT the close of the very weighty speech with which the Viceroy of India concluded the Budget debate in the Indian Council at Calcutta this year (March 25th, 1903) occurs the following remarkable passage :—

"There is one final subject that is rarely mentioned in these debates, and that finds little place in the many utterances which the head of the Government is called upon to make in the course of the year, and yet in a sense it is the most important of all. I allude to Foreign Affairs; and it must be remembered that in the case of India the phrase includes her relations with the whole of her neighbours, and that this carries with it the politics of the greater part of the Asiatic Continent. I doubt if even the thoughtful public has at all realised the silent but momentous change that is going on, and that will one day have an effect upon India that is at present but dimly discerned. In the old days, and it may almost be said up to the last fifteen years, the foreign relations of India were practically confined to her dealings with Afghanistan, and to the designs or movements of the great Power

beyond; and the foreign policy of India had little to do with any other foreign nation. It is true that we had territories or outposts of influence that brought us into contact with Persia and Turkey, and that we had occasional dealings with Arabian tribes. Now all that is changed, and events are passing which are gradually drawing this country, once so isolated and remote, into the vortex of the world's politics, and that will materially affect its future. The change has been due to two reasons. Firstly, as our own dominion has expanded, and our influence upon our frontier consolidated, we have been brought into more direct and frequent relations with the countries lying immediately beyond. For instance, the annexation of Upper Burma brought us into contact with an important corner of the Chinese Empire, and created a batch of frontier and other political problems of its own. But the second reason is much more important. Europe has woke up, and is beginning to take a revived interest in Asia. Russia with her vast territories, her great ambitions, and her unarrested advance, has been the pioneer in this movement, and with her, or after her, have come her competitors, rivals, and allies. Thus, as all these foreigners arrive upon the scene and push forward into the vacant spots, we are slowly having a European situation recreated in Asia, with the same figures upon the stage. The great European Powers are also becoming the great Asiatic Powers. Already we have Great Britain, Russia, France, Germany, and Turkey; and then, in place of all the smaller European kingdoms and principalities, we have the empires and states of the East—Japan, China, Tibet, Siam, Afghanistan, Persia, only a few of them strong and robust, the majority containing the seeds of inevitable decay. There lie in these events and in this renewed contact or collision, as the case may be, between the East and the West, omens of the greatest significance to this country. Europe is so accurately parcelled out between

the various States and Powers, the balance of power is suspended on so fine a thread, and the slightest disturbance would imperil such wide interests, that short of some serious and unforeseen convulsion, which everyone would wish to avert, great changes are not to be anticipated there. Africa is rapidly being overrun by the few European Powers who have obtained a foothold upon that continent, and before long its political destinies and territorial grouping will have taken something like definite shape. But in Asia a great deal is still in flux and solution, and there must, and there will, be great changes. It will be well to realise what an effect these must have upon India, and how they must add to our responsibilities and cares. Our Indian dominions now directly touch those of Turkey in many parts of the Arabian peninsula, those of Russia on the Pamirs, those of China along the entire border of Turkestan and Yunnan, those of France on the Upper Mekong. In our dealings with them the Foreign Department in India is becoming the Asiatic branch of the Foreign Office in England. Then round all our borders is the fringe of Asiatic states to which I just now alluded, whose integrity and whose freedom from hostile influence are vital to our welfare, but over whose future the clouds are beginning to gather. In Europe we are a maritime Power who are merely called upon to defend our own shores from invasion, and who are confronted by no land dangers or foes. In Asia we have both a seaboard and a land frontier many thousands of miles in length, and though Providence has presented us on some portion of our land frontiers with the most splendid natural defences in the world, yet the situation must become more and not less anxious as rival or hostile influences creep up to these ramparts, and as the ground outside them becomes the arena of new combinations and the field of unforeseen ambitions. All these circumstances will tend—they are already tending

—to invest the work of the Indian Foreign Department with ever-increasing importance, and they demand a vigilance and a labour of which there are but few indications in anything that reaches the public ear or falls under the public eye. Questions of internal development, administrative anxieties, agrarian and fiscal problems, fill all our minds, just as they have occupied the greater part of my speech this afternoon. But do not let the people of India think that we shall never have anything but domestic cares in this country. Do not let them forget that there are other and not inferior duties that devolve upon her rulers, that the safety of the Indian frontier, and the maintenance of the British dominion in those parts of Asia where it has for long been established, and where it is the surest, if not the sole, guarantee for peace and progress, are in their hands, and that this, no less than internal reform, is part of England's duty. I see no reason for anticipating trouble upon our borders, and I know of no question that is at present in an acute or menacing phase. But do not let anyone, on the strength of that, go to sleep in the happy illusion that anxiety will never come. The geographical position of India will more and more push her into the forefront of international politics. She will more and more become the strategical frontier of the British Empire. All these are circumstances that should give us food for reflection, and that impose upon us the duty of incessant watchfulness and precaution. They require that our forces shall be in a high state of efficiency, our defences secure, and our schemes of policy carefully worked out and defined. Above all, they demand a feeling of solidarity and common interest among those—and they include every inhabitant of this country, from the Raja to the Raiat—whose interests are wrapped up in the preservation of the Indian Empire, both for the sake of India itself and for the wider good of mankind."

In these pregnant sentences Lord Curzon defined, with the authority belonging alike to his intimate knowledge of Asiatic countries and peoples and to the high office he holds under the Crown, the question with which British statesmanship is confronted in what Captain Mahan has aptly christened "The Middle East," that is to say, in those regions of Asia which extend to the borders of India or command the approaches to India, and which are consequently bound up with the problems of Indian political as well as military defence. The Middle Eastern Question is itself only a part of a much larger question upon which the future of Asia depends. It is not indeed a new question, for it has occupied the minds of far-sighted statesmen for generations past. It is a continuation of the same question with which we have long been familiar in the Near East. It is closely connected with the more novel development of international rivalry in the Far East. It is the outcome of that constant projection of European forces—moral, commercial, and military—into Asia which is slowly but steadily transforming all the conditions that enabled us to achieve, and so far to retain, as the masters of India, a position of unparalleled ascendency in the Asiatic Continent.

Owing partly to the innate conservatism of the British mind, which is both self-reliant and slow to move, prone to criticism yet fundamentally optimistic, and partly to the immense complexity of our national interests scattered over a world-wide Empire which has been built up by a series of individual efforts rather than by any uniform and collective design, we are apt as a nation to take things as we find them, and having no reason to be dissatisfied with them on the whole, we

are also disposed to assume that they will go on as they are, without troubling ourselves over-much about the unceasing changes which are going on around us, and which, without making themselves so directly and visibly felt as to compel public attention, are constantly and materially affecting the ground upon which we stand in our relations to the outside world. Considered solely as an absolute quantity, our position in Asia, with which it will be generally agreed that our whole position as an Empire is largely bound up, is as strong as, if not stronger than, it has ever been. Can the same be said of it if we consider it not as an absolute but as a relative quantity, *i.e.* in relation to the various other quantities which make up the great political equation of the balance of Asiatic power? Not to speak for the moment of the great continental powers of Europe, has the value of those other quantities in the equation, which are called Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, China, Tibet, Siam, remained constant? or has it not, on the contrary, varied so considerably as to modify very seriously, and in most cases to our detriment, all the conditions of the equation? Whether such variations are due to internal or to external causes, they necessarily affect the problem as a whole, and it will be my object in the following pages to try and measure their real importance and to indicate some of the consequences which must inevitably ensue from them.

"PRESENT ARMS!" (p. 42)

MARCHING AT EASE (p. 42)

PERSIAN SOLDIERS

CHAPTER II

THE PERSIAN ASPECT OF THE PROBLEM

OF the factors of the Middle Eastern question which most closely affect our position in India, Persia is, with Afghanistan, the most important. Nowhere certainly can the conditions which are transforming the Asiatic situation be studied with greater profit. Nearly fourteen years have elapsed since the present Viceroy of India wrote for *The Times* the admirable series of letters which he subsequently embodied and developed in his exhaustive work, *Persia and the Persian Question* —a work that deservedly ranks as the most important modern contribution to our knowledge of the condition of Persia and to a proper understanding of the part she is destined to play, whether actively or passively, in the history of Asiatic politics. Persia herself remains to-day exactly the same inert organism that Lord Curzon described in 1889–90, but her inertia has not been proof against the influence of the motive forces which have been closing in upon her in the interval. Nor is it only that she has herself suffered changes which are none the less significant because they have been forced upon her. The events which have taken place in Asia outside of Persia have reacted upon Persia herself with a force, which unaided, she has been powerless to resist. She has been gradually

caught up and overwhelmed in the vortex of international ambitions, which she could neither escape nor control.

Up to quite the end of the eighteenth century Persia had never been seriously thought of in Europe as a political factor. All that was known of her had been learnt from the narratives — singularly copious and romantic—of the merchant adventurers who had from time to time sought more or less successfully to open up trade relations with her from Western Europe. Curiously enough it was the British "Moscovy Company" that first attempted, in the days when Ivan the Terrible reigned at Moscow and the good Queen Bess over these islands, to tap the trade of Persia in British interests by way of the Volga and the Caspian in competition with the Portuguese galleons that already sailed the Persian Gulf. There are few stranger pages of history when read in the light of the present situation than the records of that Company and of its successor, the British Russia Company, which for two centuries applied themselves repeatedly, and with fluctuating fortunes, to conquer the markets of Persia for British trade from a Russian base. Their ultimate failure coincides with the period when British enterprise, which had been seeking access for some time past both from the Mediterranean and from India to the southern markets of Persia, at last succeeded in securing a strong foothold on the Persian Gulf. The British Caspian trade was abolished by a decree of the Empress Catherine of Russia in 1746, and the last English factories in Northern Persia were abandoned in 1749. In 1763 the Shah Kerim Khan issued a solemn firman to "the Right Worshipful William Andrew Price, Esquire, Governor-General for the English nation in

the Gulf of Persia," granting important rights and privileges for the establishment of a factory at Bushire, and for the sending of British goods customs free all over the kingdom of Persia. It is true that long before that date there had been commercial relations between India and Persia, and British factories in the Gulf, both at Jask and at Gombroon, or Bunder Abbas, as it is now called. A British commercial agent had even resided at Isfahân. But British enterprise in the South had had to fight the ground inch by inch against other European rivals, Portuguese, Dutch, and French in succession, and it was not till the second half of the eighteenth century that that British commercial ascendency was established, which in the course of the following century grew into an unchallenged monopoly of political influence in the Persian Gulf, extending from its shores far into the interior of Southern and Central Persia, and even to the Persian Court in the north.

It was the devouring genius of the first Napoleon and his gigantic schemes of world conquest which led for the first time about a hundred years ago to the establishment of official diplomatic relations, and to the conclusion of an important political treaty between this country and Persia. The conquests of Nadir Shah, who had carried the victorious arms of Persia down to Delhi in 1739, and of Ahmed Shah Abdali, who after Nadir's death proclaimed himself independent sovereign of the Afghans, and had led them down repeatedly to plunder the cities and overrun the plains of Northern India, had brought home to the British rulers of Hindustan the ever-present danger of invasion from the North. As lately as 1796, Zeman Shah, a grandson of Ahmed Shah Abdali, had advanced as far as Lahore with the

professed purpose of rescuing the Moghul dynasty from the domination of the Mahrattas. It is not surprising in these circumstances that British statesmen should have trembled for the safety of our Indian possessions when it became known in 1800 that a scheme was being planned in Europe for a fresh invasion of India from Central Asia, under the joint auspices of France and Russia. Not only had the scheme been discussed between Napoleon and the Tsar Paul, but preparations were actually made on the Volga for the despatch of a Russian force, and a secret embassy had been sent from France to Teheran to arrange for the passage of a French army, which was to join hands with the Russians in the plains of Northern India. The whole scheme was upset by the assassination of the Tsar in March, 1801, but the British Government had already taken steps effectually to thwart one of its main features. Lord Wellesley, then Governor-General of India, had despatched Captain John Malcolm to Persia, and in January a treaty of defensive alliance had been successfully concluded with Fath Ali Shah, under which his Persian Majesty bound himself, in return for definite promises of material assistance, to attack the Afghans in the event of their attempting to invade India, and to prevent the French from "establishing themselves on any of the islands or shores of Persia." A few years later, however, in 1805, hostilities broke out, not between Persia and France, but at the instigation of the latter, between Persia and Russia, with whom we were then in alliance against France. Hard pressed by the Russians in Georgia, the Shah appealed to us for assistance, pledging himself in return to abandon the French alliance, under which Napoleon was to help him to recover the provinces conquered by

Russia, and Persia was to declare war against England and, as had been already contemplated in 1800, give passage to a French army for the invasion of India. The British Government naturally held that the Treaty of 1801 had contemplated quite a different *casus foederis*, and the Persian overtures were rejected, whereupon Fath Ali Shah threw himself altogether into the arms of Napoleon. General Gardanne arrived in Teheran in 1807 as the political and military plenipotentiary of the French Emperor, who was then at the height of his power, and proceeded with the help of a large staff of French officers to reorganise and equip the Persian Army on European lines.

But the Treaty of Tilsit, which had entirely changed Napoleon's policy towards Russia, cooled the ardour of the Persian monarch for a French alliance, which he had accepted with an eye to the recovery of his Caucasian provinces, rather than with any deliberate purpose of hostility towards England. The Indian Government, which had taken steps to consolidate its relations with the frontier states by despatching missions to the Ameers of Sind, to the Sikh chieftains, and to the ruler of Kabul, where Mr. Elphinstone concluded a treaty specifically directed against the French and Persian "confederacy," again despatched Sir John Malcolm to Persia. By one of those strange confusions partly due to departmental jealousy and partly to official carelessness and the want of proper co-ordination of our Imperial forces, which have been so frequently and seriously detrimental to British interests in Persia, the home Government appointed at the same time without reference to India a plenipotentiary of its own to proceed direct to Teheran, Sir Harford Jones. The conflict of authority between

these two representatives, and the contradictory instructions which they kept on receiving from Calcutta and from London, were not conducive to successful diplomacy. Nevertheless, though often at cross-purposes, our diplomacy "muddled through" in the end. On March 15th, 1809, Sir Harford Jones signed a treaty with the Shah, by which Fath Ali annulled all previous treaties he had entered into with European Powers, and undertook to prevent the passage of European armies through his dominions towards India, whilst we promised to support him with troops and subsidies, and to abstain from intervention, except as mediators, in any war between Persia and Afghanistan. This treaty, though endorsed by the Governor-General of India, Lord Minto, was not however ratified at home, and the wrangling between Calcutta and London over the powers of Sir John Malcolm and Sir Harford Jones, who were respectively ordered to hold the ground against each other, continued to bring both governments into ridicule at Teheran, until Sir Gore Ouseley arrived in 1812, with authority to supersede the two rival plenipotentiaries. Even then the "definitive" Treaty, which Sir Gore Ouseley concluded upon arrival, was not approved in London, and it was only on November 25th, 1814, that a final treaty "for the adjustment of the terms of the definitive Treaty of 1812" was duly signed, sealed, and delivered, declaring in the preamble that "these happy leaves are a nosegay plucked from the thornless garden of concord and tied by the hand of the plenipotentiaries of the two great States." The most important modifications of the treaty of 1812 in the instrument which thus superseded it consisted in the withdrawal of the clauses under which England had undertaken to assist Persia in the

establishment of a naval force and naval stations on the Caspian, and to supply officers and non-commissioned officers for the reorganisation of the Persian Army. In the event of an attack upon Persia by another power, England now also reserved for herself the option of paying an annual subsidy in lieu of military assistance. Fourteen years later, in 1828, when Persia was again involved in war with Russia, this obligation was commuted into one single payment, at the price of which the articles of the treaty of 1814 binding us to give assistance to Persia were finally annulled. The French danger in Persia, which even in the days of Napoleon's omnipotence was perhaps more visionary than real, had long since passed away, and the Russian danger was not yet. So we could, it was thought, afford to regard Persia as a *quantité négligeable*.

Yet during the two following decades we had frequent opportunities of realising how seriously the loss of influence we had incurred at Teheran by disappointing the expectations of the Persian Government could affect our interests beyond the frontiers of Persia. Russian diplomacy encouraged Fath Ali Shah to seek once more in Afghanistan compensation for the cessions of territory he had been compelled to make to his northern neighbour. From 1837 to 1857 our relations with Persia were periodically strained by hostile movements of Persian troops, sometimes openly and always covertly supported by Russia, against Herat. The siege of Herat in 1837–8 by a Persian army under the Shah's grandson has remained ever memorable for the gallant defence, organised mainly by the energy and ability of a single young British officer, Eldred Pottinger; but it was not raised until a demonstration had been made in the Persian Gulf, where our troops occupied the island

of Kharak. Persia was, however, only temporarily overawed. In 1851 she again attempted to interfere forcibly in the affairs of Herat, and in spite of a definite engagement to abstain from such intervention, which was signed at Teheran in January, 1853, the attitude of the Persian Court led to a complete rupture of diplomatic relations in the following year, and in 1855 another Persian expedition was despatched to Herat. Again the British Government was compelled to bring warlike pressure upon Persia, and when Herat was captured by the Persians in October, 1856, a force was sent under Sir James Outram to occupy Bushire and Muhammerah, at the head of the Persian Gulf. The campaign was short and almost bloodless, the Persian troops being routed at every point almost without a struggle; and in spite of the vain-glorious rhodomontades of the Teheran Government, which kept on issuing grotesque bulletins of fabled victories, the Shah deemed it expedient to invoke the good offices of the emperor of the French, and on March 25th, 1857, a treaty of peace was signed in Paris, by which Persia relinquished all claims to sovereignty or to the right of interference in Afghanistan. This was, indeed, the only stipulation we imposed upon Persia. We exacted no guarantees for its fulfilment; we asked for no compensation or concessions beyond a ceremonial apology to our Minister, on his return to Teheran, for the insults to which he had been subjected before the outbreak of hostilities; we agreed to restore every bit of Persian territory we had occupied; we claimed neither political nor commercial advantages. One knows not whether to admire more the generosity or the improvidence of such a treaty. It is now sometimes suggested that there must have been some connexion

between the impending outbreak of the Indian meeting and the hasty conclusion of peace with Persia. But a mere comparison of dates disposes once for all of that fiction. The treaty was negotiated in Paris in March, 1857, and neither at home nor in India had the official ear caught at that time even the faintest mutterings of the storm which was to break over India two months later. The true explanation is that the importance of Persia as a factor in the Asiatic problem, which had been momentarily realised under the pressure of the Napoleonic danger at the beginning of the last century, had then been once more entirely lost sight of.

The Crimean war had just been fought, and the Eastern question, as the Asiatic problem was then called, centred at that time in Constantinople. It was held to have been settled under the walls of Sebastopol. The remoteness of Persia, the pressure we could always exercise upon her as the masters of India, and her vulnerability in the Persian Gulf combined to relegate her to a subsidiary position on the political chessboard. Russia, no doubt, had been for a long time pressing heavily upon Persia from the Caucasus, indeed ever since the days when Peter the Great made his descent upon the southern shores of the Caspian, and the Treaties of Gulistan in 1813 and of Turkman Tchai in 1828 had already demonstrated the powerlessness of Persia to arrest the southward progress of her northern neighbour to the west of the Caspian. But Russia's conquests appeared to constitute merely a not unnatural extension of her European Empire, and she hardly claimed at that time to be a great Power in Asia, notwithstanding the vast extent of territory over which she held sway in the north. Though the diplomatic records of Teheran contained ample

evidence of the subserviency which the Persian Government had already not infrequently been compelled to show to Russia at the expense of its good relations with Great Britain, it was not until the tide of Russian conquest swept over Central Asia in the latter part of the last century that Russia was able to challenge permanently in the Persian capital the position we had hitherto occupied as the greatest European Power in Asia. The military occupation of the Trans-Caspian regions and the annexation of the Khanates and of Merv gave Russia a frontier, marching for over five hundred miles with that of Persia to the east of the Caspian, and the construction of the Central Asian Railway from Khrasnovodsk secured her a strategic position which entirely envelops the province of Khorasan, and places it and Mazanderan as completely at the mercy of a Russian army as were already the Western provinces of Ghilan and Azerbaijan.

Even then the results of this great change did not make themselves thoroughly felt in Persia until the sudden collapse of the Chinese Empire under the impact of Japan produced a fresh development of the Asiatic problem, pregnant with even more momentous issues. That Russia was not satisfied with the position she had gained in Central Asia, but was determined to make her power equally felt in Eastern Asia, had been evident from the moment when in 1891 she embarked upon so costly and formidable an enterprise as the construction of a great trunk railway connecting her European Empire through the whole length of Siberia with her remote possessions on the Pacific. The events of 1894–5 in the Far East took Russia, as they took the rest of the world, by surprise, long before the Siberian Railway could be completed.

But it was already sufficiently advanced to serve her as a weapon, offensive as well as defensive, in the conflict of international ambitions to which the inheritance of the "yellow corpse," perhaps somewhat prematurely, gave rise. Indeed, if one looks back upon the events of the last eight years in China, it is difficult to conceive how Russia could have played the part she has played with such boldness and success in the Far East had she not been in a position to use the Siberian Railway both as an excuse for pegging out her claims and as an instrument for ultimately enforcing them.

Thus in the brief course of some forty years—say between 1860 and 1900—the area of that Eastern question, which only a generation ago appeared confined mainly to the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, has been extended, not only across the Caspian to the plains of Central Asia, but to the far-away coast of the Pacific, and the problem has assumed a magnitude and a complexity which may well strain the powers of even the highest statesmanship. Before entering upon a discussion of the immediate objects of Russian policy at Teheran and the methods it employs, it is therefore necessary to emphasise the point that the importance and significance of Russia's action in Persia cannot be measured merely by the international interests which it affects locally, though these should not be underrated. The policy of Russia in Persia is only part of a great system of Asiatic policy—commercial, military, and political—which is being steadily built up by the persevering hands of Russian statesmen, whose breadth of grasp and continuity of purpose are liable to no disturbance from the fluctuations of public sentiment or the precariousness of parliamentary majorities. To

them Teheran is merely one link in a long chain which stretches from Constantinople to Peking, and the pressure they apply in Persia is perhaps not infrequently meant to be felt as much in the Far East or in the Near East as in the Middle East. That policy may or may not be incompatible with the interests of the British Empire—an empire whose fortunes can hardly be dissevered from those of its great Indian dependency—but it cannot fail to affect them very considerably. In a minor or varying degree it must also affect the interests of other powers who have, or hope to acquire, a stake in Asia, but none of these are at present comparable with our own. Not many years ago the Persian question was perhaps not unnaturally regarded as a separate issue to be dealt with on its own merits. To-day it requires no exceptionally far-sighted statesmanship to see that it is merely part of the larger question, upon the solution of which the future of Asia must depend. That question is whether Asia is really a field in which there is room for two of the greatest European Powers, which are also the two greatest Asiatic Powers, to fulfil their peaceful mission in friendly competition, or whether their rivalry must ultimately degenerate into a struggle for exclusive mastery. The special interest which attaches to the Persian branch of that question is that, whereas in other regions of Asia new factors are introduced into the problem by the aspirations of other powers that claim for themselves also a place in the Asiatic sunshine, Great Britain and Russia still stand alone and almost face to face in Persia, in the presence of a sick-bed more desperate perhaps than that of any other Asiatic monarchy.

THE MORNING START FROM A PERSIAN CARAVANSERAI

Face p. 18

CHAPTER III

THROUGH "THE GATES OF THE CASPIAN"

THE shortest and most convenient route for the traveller proceeding from Western Europe to the Persian capital is by rail through Russia to Baku and thence by steamer across the Caspian to Enzeli and Resht. He will find it also in many ways the most instructive, for it will afford him an opportunity of noting the energy and enterprise with which Russia has not only developed her means of communication in that direction, but has practically secured to herself the monopoly of access to Northern Persia. Less than twenty years ago, when I was first in Persia, the main railway system of Russia was entirely cut off from the line, which had then only been quite recently completed between Batum and Baku, by the great mountain range of the Caucasus, across which there was only the old military road from Vladikavkas to Tiflis over the Dariel Pass. Russia still considered herself bound by Article 59 of the Treaty of Berlin, under which she had undertaken to make Batum, which had been ceded to her under that instrument by Turkey, "a free port essentially commercial," and, by way of Batum, goods for Persia and Central Asia could still be imported from Europe under a transit pass which exempted them from the payment of Russian import duties. At that time,

both for freight and passengers, the most commodious route to Northern Persia was therefore unquestionably by Constantinople and the Black Sea to Batum and thence by rail, *viâ* Tiflis, to Baku. This has long since ceased. By a mere stroke of the pen Russia freed herself, in spite of Lord Rosebery's cogent and logically irrefutable protest, from the obligations she had contracted at Berlin. Not only has Batum ceased to be a free port, essentially commercial, but the exaction of Russian import and export duties on all goods sent through Batum for Persia or beyond has long since killed the old transit trade. On the other hand, the Russian railway system, which has been vigorously developed throughout Southern Russia, has been linked up with Baku and the lines south of the Caucasus to Batum and Kars by a line that runs along the northern spurs of the mountain range and the coast of the Caspian from Rostoff, on the Don, direct to Baku. Besides the ordinary daily service, which is very comfortable but very slow, a weekly *train de luxe*, known as the "Petroleum Express," conveys the traveller in sixty-two hours from Moscow to the great oil city on the Caspian at an average speed of twenty-seven miles an hour, which, though from our point of view not excessive, is in the circumstances as much as can be reasonably expected. There is another and even more expeditious route from Central Europe, *viâ* Vienna, Lemberg, Ekaterinoslaw, and Voroshisk, to Rostoff on the Don and Baku, but it has the disadvantage of more numerous changes. It is, however, the route used for the mails, and whereas twenty years ago three weeks was the *minimum* for the transmission of letters between London and Teheran, the mail from Teheran is now often delivered in London, or *vice versâ*, on the

twelfth day after despatch, and generally within the fortnight.

From another point of view Baku may be regarded also as the most instructive as well as the most convenient point of departure for the traveller passing out of Europe into Persia. As if to accentuate the contrast which the spectacle of an ancient Asiatic monarchy in the last stage of decay is about to present to him, Baku offers him the spectacle of a young and progressive city in which the spirit of Western enterprise is far more conspicuous than, perhaps, in any other Russian city. Distinguished Russian writers like Prince Ukhtomsky, who claim for Russia a special mission in Asia, are fond of urging that in a certain affinity of race and temperament the Russian possesses peculiar qualifications for dealing with Asiatics which are denied to the Western European, and not least to the Englishman. There is no doubt much truth in this contention. The most superficial observer who passes into Russia from Germany or Austria can hardly help feeling that, whatever the geographical text-books may say, when he has once crossed the Russian frontier he is no longer quite in Europe, though he is not yet actually in Asia. The comparison may seem paradoxical, but to anyone who has visited Northern China, Moscow itself, with its semi-sacred Kremlin, in which the barbaric splendour of palaces and churches, stiff with gold and precious stones, has been accumulated for centuries to glorify the mystical association of spiritual and temporal sovereignty in the person of the Tsar, carries more than a suggestion of Peking and its Forbidden City, sacred to the Son of Heaven. Even to the outward eye the view from the tower of Ivan Veliky over the thousands of cupolas and domes, gleaming with gold

plates or painted in vivid tints of green and blue, and the green or brown roofs of the Russian houses, intermingled with trees and gardens, which mark the panorama of Moscow, has no little in common with the spectacle which the yellow-tiled palaces and temples of Imperial Peking and the green or grey roofs of the Manchu and Chinese cities in a similar setting of foliage present from the walls of the Celestial capital. Just as there is no distinct line of demarcation drawn by nature between the Russian Empire in Europe and in Asia, and the Steppes of the Don and the Volga merge imperceptibly into the plains of Central Asia, so the Russian character seems to have passed through a series of subtle gradations from the Asiatic type out of which it was originally evolved into a type which can no longer be called Asiatic, but which should certainly not be labelled as European. In the history of nations there has been perhaps no more curious phenomenon than the experiment upon which the rulers of modern Russia have embarked in their endeavour to blend with the fatalism and mysticism and passivity of the East the spirit of enterprise and individualism peculiar to the West.

Whatever may be the case in other parts of Russia, in Baku, at any rate, the West has triumphed. Though long strings of camels may still be seen journeying towards its markets laden with the produce of Asia, though the Tartar city is still girdled with its ancient walls, though Persians and Turkomans in their quaint Oriental dresses still crowd its bazaars, Baku is essentially a European city in which the spirit of the West prevails. It is, in fact, more European than any other town in Russia, except, perhaps, St. Petersburg, Warsaw, or Odessa. It is not only that it possesses

spacious streets, well-stocked shops, stately public buildings, and handsome private residences, as well as great commercial houses, and is in fact equipped with most of the modern appliances of a prosperous trading city. There is something in the air of the place which makes one feel that in Baku he is in what our American cousins would call "a live city." Its extraordinarily rapid growth can indeed hardly be matched on this side of the Atlantic. When I passed through Baku in 1884 its population was about 60,000 or 70,000. To-day it is getting on for a quarter of a million. Its prosperity is, of course, entirely due to the great oilfields which surround it. In 1884 they yielded 89,000,000 puds (the pud = 36 lbs.); in 1901 they yielded 671,000,000 puds, or approximately 12,000,000 tons of naphtha, which produced for exportation about 2,500,000 tons of kerosene and over 5,000,000 tons of residuals used for fuel on the greater part of the Eastern and Southern Russian railways, as well as on the Russian steamers on the Volga, on the Caspian, and on the Black Sea. A few years ago there was still a disposition to believe that the supply of oil must be limited, and that the increasing rapidity of production must lead to an early exhaustion of the fields. Nothing has happened to confirm that idea, and he would be a bold man who would attempt to set a limit either to the productivity or to the life of the Baku oilfields. Though from time to time individual wells are abandoned because they are exhausted or can no longer be worked at a profit, especially in view of the heavy royalties for which too sanguine speculators made themselves responsible during the petroleum "boom" a few years ago, the number of producing wells has increased steadily from 458 in 1891 to 1,924 in 1901. There were

842 new wells in boring last year, and 311 old wells were being deepened, and at the present moment an important scheme is being carried out for draining an inland lake, which will lay bare an entirely new field reputed to be of exceptional wealth. Of the prodigious quantities of naphtha stored away in the bowels of the earth some idea may be gathered from the so-called "fountains" or springs of oil that frequently burst forth in the course of boring and, defying all restraint, shoot up into the air in jets over 200 feet high, which it takes days to bring under control. One of these "fountains" caught fire on one occasion and burnt steadily for three weeks, giving away so much gas that for that period the streets of Baku twelve miles away required no other illuminants. Such accidents, disastrous as they are, the people of Baku mention, merely, and with no little pride, as illustrating what their wells can do, and they do not for a moment disturb their faith in the future of an industry which, apart from other developments, already supplies more than half the world with petroleum. There is probably much more danger at present of over-production than of any falling off in productivity. The grave economic crisis through which Russia has been and is still passing could not fail to affect Baku, and, combined with other causes, it has substantially depressed the price of naphtha products. During the boom of 1899 the price of crude oil rose to 16·7 kopeks per pud. In 1901 it fell to 5·45 kopeks, and last year it had recovered only to just over 8 kopeks per pud. But during the cholera visitations and famines of 1892–3 it fell to very much lower values, and no fluctuations, however severe, can, it is believed, permanently affect the prosperity of a city which controls and handles such inexhaustible sources of wealth.

One important factor in the prosperity of Baku is the wide range of its trade, which extends from the British Islands in one direction to the Far East in the other. Hence, also, the cosmopolitan character of the city, where, in spite of the exclusive tendencies of Russian economic policy, British and German and French communities are tolerated and encouraged to play their respective parts in endowing this arid reach of the Caspian with the social amenities of Western life as well as with the material equipment of Western enterprise, to the unquestionable benefit of the Russian State.

I have dwelt at some length on the wonderful picture of successful human activity which Baku now presents, though only a hundred years ago it was a neglected outpost of the Persian Empire, which then stretched up to the Caucasus, because, as I said just now, it serves to heighten the contrast that awaits the Western traveller when he lands on Persian soil at Enzeli after a voyage of barely two hundred miles. He steps at Baku straight from the quay of a well-appointed harbour on to a small but fairly comfortable steamer, which, after calling for some hours at two intermediate points on the coast, drops anchor at an early hour on the second morning after departure from Baku opposite to a mud flat with a few low buildings over which the Persian flag displays the Lion and the Sun. That is Enzeli. The Caspian is so shallow along this shore that, though the steamer only draws about eight feet of water, she cannot, even in the most favourable circumstances, approach within more than a mile of the royal port of Persia. In unfavourable circumstances—and the Caspian has ever been famous for the violence and suddenness of its storms—the steamer cannot even

attempt to cast anchor, and luckless passengers have been known to be carried three times from Baku to within sight of Enzeli and back without being able to land. In calm weather the traveller's experiences between the steamer and his destination at Resht are instructive, and, according to his own idiosyncrasies, may seem either entertaining or merely wearisome. In rough weather they are apt to be painful and sometimes even dangerous. From the steamer he transfers himself and his effects as best he can on board a small steam launch, which conveys him over the bar to the Customs station at Enzeli. The rains caught up from the north by the great mountain range which divides the main Persian plateau from the Caspian descend with almost tropical abundance upon the belt of low-lying land which extends from the foot of the hills to the seashore, and the streams thus formed flow lazily to the Caspian in tortuous channels broadening out here and there into great lagoons, which are separated from the sea only by narrow spits of land thrown up by the action of its tideless waves. Enzeli lies on the extremity of one of these spits. After passing through the Customs the traveller has to make his way again by water across the Ab-i-murd, or Dead Water, as the Persians aptly call the lagoon some six or seven miles in breadth which still lies between him and his destination. The greater part of this can be done in a steam launch, but if you decide for the steam launch in preference to a native boat pulled by half a dozen lusty Ghilaks, you must have made arrangements beforehand for such a boat to meet you at the further end of the lagoon, for beyond a certain point there is not enough draught of water even for a steam launch, and you must, willy-nilly, transfer yourself again from the

steam launch into a native craft which, after another hour of alternate rowing and towing and poling up a narrow creek, lands you at last in the shallow mud pond which is called Pireh-bazar, the harbour of Resht, still some six or seven miles by road from the city.

The whole of this northern belt of Persia between the Caspian and the mountains is covered with dense vegetation, South European in its character, but almost tropical in its luxuriance; and on a beautiful morning in the early autumn, such as that with which I was favoured towards the middle of September, 1902, it is pleasant enough to glide in a native boat across the placid waters of the lagoon, reflecting the cloudless azure of the sky, and up the winding creek between dense masses of jungle, with tier upon tier of blue mountains rising mistily in the far distance out of the heat haze of the moist lowlands. But what a contrast between the busy scenes, the strenuousness of modern life, one has left behind him only a few hours ago at Baku, and the old-world apathy and squalid shiftlessness of this royal road into Persia—a road conceived, it would seem, for the express purpose, not of removing, but of multiplying obstacles to traffic. For years past the Persian Government is supposed to have been studying schemes for cutting a channel through the bar and dredging a port at Enzeli, as well as for providing a better approach to Resht than that which Pireh-bazar affords. There are no serious difficulties in the way, the cost would not be excessive, and the outlay would certainly be remunerative. One might even imagine that the pride of the Persian rulers, who are by no means reluctant to copy the West in other and less useful matters, would be enlisted in support of some such scheme; for after all, apart from all economic

considerations of trade, it is by way of Enzeli and Resht that the mails between Europe and Persia are carried and the vast majority of European travellers approach the Persian capital. But year after year passes, precious millions are squandered in other directions, and the royal road into Persia remains what it has been for generations, so that he who travels by it may at once leave at the gates of the Persian kingdom any illusions he may have brought with him as to the amenability of Persia to any other progressive influences than those of compulsion. Between Enzeli and Resht he can see Persia as it is.

CHAPTER IV

THE "RUSSIAN" ROAD TO TEHERAN

I DESCRIBED in the last chapter those truly Asiatic stages of the royal road into Persia which give so much food for reflection to the Western traveller between leaving the Caspian steamer at Enzeli and finally landing on *terra firma* in the mud-pond harbour of Pireh-bazar. There he still finds himself some six or seven miles from the town of Resht. But, nevertheless, he feels himself once more almost in Europe, for he is once more on a fairly good carriage-road, and that road runs not merely into Resht, but thence for some 220 miles over difficult mountain ranges to the Persian capital. Needless to say, it is not a Persian road—that is to say, it is not a road built by Persians. It is a Russian road, built largely with Russian capital and wholly by Russian enterprise, and it constitutes the first, and to the traveller of whatever nationality a by no means unwelcome, manifestation of the ascendency which Russia has gained in Northern Persia. Controlled though it be ostensibly by a private company, it is no secret that the road from Resht to Teheran would never have been constructed and could not be maintained without generous assistance from the Russian State. Persia has not contributed a penny towards it, though a few Persians are understood to hold shares in the

company, just as a few Chinese are supposed *pro formâ* to hold shares in the Manchurian Railway. The outlay has been enormous, for, in spite of the undeniable difficulties of construction—the road rises to an altitude of over 7,000 feet in crossing the mountain range—the cost, which is estimated at £300,000, must be pronounced excessive. It is, as I have said, about 220 miles long, and of these 220 miles some 90 miles on the level plain between Kazvin and Teheran had already been made, at least in a rudimentary fashion, by a Persian company, which was bought up by the Russians. The cost of improving that section of the road must have been relatively trifling, and the bulk of the total outlay must therefore be assigned to the section between Resht and Kazvin, which does not exceed 130 miles in length. This represents an average of over £2,000 a mile, and, though the road is fairly well built and the engineering difficulties encountered in climbing the steep slopes—at first so beautifully wooded and then so barren and precipitous—to the north of the range, and in threading a way through the gaunt and narrow gorges of sun-scorched rock which lead down on to the great plateau of Northern Persia, must have been very considerable, so heavy an expenditure can be accounted for only by the lavish extravagance and absence of all financial control which generally characterise Russian undertakings of this nature. This, however, is an aspect of the question upon which it would be ungrateful to dwell, and, for my part, I was much more disposed to regret that the Russians had not undertaken the exploitation as well as the construction of the road, instead of sub-letting the former to Persian contractors, who ran antediluvian carriages with wretchedly overworked and under-fed horses. The contractors, it is

true, complained that, in spite of the heavy rates they charged, they are running the road at a loss, and I was assured that the Russians intended before long to relieve them of their contract and work the road themselves with an exclusively Russian staff.

Whether the result of the undertaking be financially successful or the reverse, we may be sure that the Russians have not been throwing their money away. What their objects are is sufficiently obvious. There is no reason to suppose that they have ever contemplated using this road for strategic purposes. The difficulties of approach from the sea are sufficient to dispose of any such idea. Moreover, as I shall show later on, from the strategic point of view, the north of Persia lies absolutely open to Russia in so many other directions that she might well have left the Resht road to take care of itself. Even without the road from Erivan to Tabriz, in North-Western Persia, for which the Russians have obtained a concession, they can at any moment pour their troops as easily from Transcaucasia into Azerbaijan as they can along the coast of the Caspian from Baku and Lenkoran into the province of Gilan. A few years ago, when there were troubles at Astrabad, to the south-east of the Caspian, the Russians gave Persia a foretaste of what they could do in Mazenderan by despatching a few hundred men from Chikishliar, who remained for some months in occupation of the provincial capital. Further east, again, the Trans-Caspian or Central Asian Railway runs for some hundreds of miles close along the northern frontier of Persia, and dominates the whole of Khorasan, in the absence of any Persian force which can be dignified with the name of an army. It is therefore quite unnecessary to suggest strategic reasons

for the construction of the Resht road to Teheran. But Russia, none the less, gets value for her money. Not only does the road serve the ends of Russian commercial policy, which is almost openly directed to the acquisition of an absolute monopoly in the trade of Northern Persia, but it is in itself a splendid and perfectly legitimate advertisement of Russian influence. Russian occupies the place of honour in every document drawn up in connection with transportation on the road. The names of all the stations figure conspicuously in Russian characters. The barriers at which the Russian company levies its tolls are in the hands of Russian officials. The Russians have the maintenance of the road, and all the gangs employed on repairs are under the orders of Russian overseers. Not only, therefore, is every Persian travelling along the main road from the north to the capital made to feel that the Russians hold the right of access to it, but the inhabitants of all the adjoining districts, who provide the requisite labour, are taught to look up to the Russians as their employers and their masters. But though the advantages which Russia thus reaps from this undertaking deserve to be noted, it would be unfair as well as futile to cavil at them. The whole position which Russia has acquired in the north of Persia deserves, I think, to be studied in a spirit, not of idle recrimination, but of dispassionate, and even friendly, consideration.

Whilst the road from Resht to Teheran affords a perfect illustration of Russian activity, it happened to afford, whilst I was passing over it, an accidental, but equally striking, illustration of Persian mediævalism. The Shah was on his way back from Europe, and in accordance with immemorial custom, the whole of his Court, numbering thousands of retainers, was

hurrying down to welcome him at the frontier. It was the strangest and most picturesque spectacle which the eye of an artist enamoured of quaint contrasts, or of a student in search of a typical presentment of the unchanging East, could hope to light upon. For hours at a time there streamed past us a ceaseless procession of camels, mules, horses, carts and litters, laden with the *personnel* and the paraphernalia of an Eastern Court, which, though it has to some slight extent adopted a travesty of European fashions, and has lost from other causes much of its ancient splendour, is still in most respects as barbaric as when Tavernier's travels excited the wonder of the French people, accustomed to the magnificence of the *Roi Soleil*. An advanced guard of Persian Cossacks—a squadron of the brigade of Persian "Cossack" cavalry which, drilled and officered by Russians, alone stands for efficiency in the Persian Army—opened the march with some show of ordered pomp. At some distance behind them came a regiment of Persian infantry, slouching along the road in every variety of patched or tattered uniform—once upon a time sky blue—some with two shoes of different patterns, many with only one, and most of them with none, the majority old men or mere boys, with a sprinkling of every other age, from extreme youth to extreme senility. Their rifles, marked by the same variety of pattern and condition, came afterwards, stuck promiscuously on to the pack of any unobjecting mule. Those who had fallen out hopelessly on the way, or had a few coppers to spare—or were they, perhaps, the officers?—we met later on, reclining in picturesque confusion on the top of cumbrous baggage carts. A military band was conveyed in an even more original fashion, each of the

larger instruments—big drums, trombones, horns, etc.—crowning in solitary grandeur the load of a pack camel. What the endless strings of beasts of burden carried in the huge wooden chests and packages of every shape and size under which they slithered down the steep mountain slopes, one could only guess at when some mishap necessitated the repacking of a load in the middle of the road. Then one might get a glimpse of costly carpets and tent walls of many colours, of robes of honour and silken embroideries, of quilted bedding and cushions of soft texture. Here and there a silver ewer, or a piece of gaudy French furniture, which had been overlooked until the last moment, or had proved recalcitrant to Persian packing, was tied on loosely with a bit of string, and kept clanking on the side of the load as the unconscious mule disported himself along the road.

On brightly caparisoned horses officers of the household, with their silver staves of office stuck jauntily under the thigh, and a leather peak adjusted to their black lambswool cap at the proper angle to shield their eyes from the sun—a very practical adjustment, which, however, imparts to the wearer a curiously rakish air—Court attendants of various ranks—many of them, no doubt, generals of the first or second class, a rank which is liberally conferred in Persia for services entirely unconnected with the art of war—flunkeys in scarlet coats, with faded bravery of gold and silver lace, high officials of State in full-waisted black broadcloth coats of semi-European design, *mullahs* in green or white turbans, of different degrees of sanctity and learning, notabilities of the countryside from far and near, and hundreds of menials and camp followers of every description, real "beggars on horseback," jostled each other in be-

THE "RUSSIAN" ROAD FROM RESHT TO TEHERAN

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wildering confusion along the road, or sat in groups at the wayside resthouses, discussing the latest gossip over their waterpipes and tea. In hooded Russian carts drawn by four horses abreast, or in wooden panniers slung on either side of a camel, Persian ladies of high and low degree—their faces and their figures alike shrouded beyond any recognition in the ample black domino and thick white linen veil which all invariably wear out of doors—were following in the wake of their lords and masters. Further on, close to Teheran, we came across two huge camps in which the Shah's harem or *anderoon*, to use the Persian equivalent, which had been suddenly commanded by telegraph from Europe to wait upon his Majesty at the frontier, were resting after a night's march, during the heat of the day, in charge of Court officials and black eunuchs. At intervals the road was cleared for the passage of some Prince of the Blood or great officer of State, travelling down in an ancient brougham or *calèche*, with four or six horses *à la Daumont* and seedy postillions, followed by an uncouth retinue of pipe-bearers and *ferrashes* on horseback.

It was a wonderful succession of *tableaux vivants*, embodying the whole story of what "Eothen" terms the glory and the havoc of the East—more especially the havoc. If only one could have recorded the scene on a cinematograph for production at the Hippodrome, where the Shah had himself been seen but a few weeks before surrounded by the well-ordered pomp of the West, it would have helped not only the British public, but even responsible statesmen at home, to form some conception of men and things as they really are in Persia. Just imagine what a reckless waste of time and money this motley pilgrimage means! For a

month at least the whole business of the State, such as it is, is at a standstill. The Shah was, of course, stated to have given emphatic orders, immediately upon his accession, that the Court was not to prey upon the country through which it moved, and that everything was to be paid for at full value. But how is the Shah to know whether his orders are carried out? Of course they are not carried out, and no swarm of locusts lays a countryside more bare than this ceremonial army on the march. As for the drain on the Shah's exchequer, it is impossible to form any trustworthy estimate, but I was assured that the mere cost of moving the royal *anderoon* from Teheran to Resht amounted to 30,000 tomans, or about £6,000. The total expenditure probably did not fall far short of £40,000 or £50,000, and this in a country reduced to the utmost financial straits, of which the total public revenue for all purposes is not believed to exceed one and a half million sterling per annum. But it is an ancient custom, and, if it is a plague to the people of the country and a heavy drain upon the exchequer, it is a source of splendid profit to many powerful individuals, whose vested interests even the Shah must think twice before he touches. The East cannot, and should not, be judged by the standards of the West. But in this procession of a moribund past, with its strange mixture of magnificence and squalor, passing unconcernedly down the "Russian" road to the Persian capital, the most casual of Western observers could hardly fail to find a vivid reminder of the fateful writing on the wall, translated on this occasion into Russian characters.

CHAPTER V

RUSSIAN ASCENDENCY IN TEHERAN: THE POWER OF THE SWORD

PETER the Great's celebrated will is doubtless an apocryphal document, but it can nevertheless hardly be denied that in it are to be found the germs of the Asiatic policy which his successors on the Russian throne have more or less deliberately pursued down to the present day. It was Peter the Great who gave the first impulse to Russian ambitions in the direction of Persia. In 1715 he despatched to the Persian Court at Isfahan under Colonel Walinsky the first of those semi-military missions with undefined and elastic powers which have played since then so large a part in the Asiatic diplomacy of Russia. Within eight years from that date Peter himself had advanced as far as Derbend on the Caspian at the head of a Russian army, and wrested from the feeble young Shah Tahmasp II., in return for illusory promises of assistance against the Afghans, a treaty ceding to Russia the whole of the Persian littoral provinces of the Caspian. The bargain was, however, never carried out, and on the death of Peter in 1725, Nadir Kuli Khan, whose fame as Nadir Shah was soon to spread throughout Asia, had little difficulty in re-establishing Persian authority in the provinces which his master

had so lightly abandoned, and by the Treaty of Resht in 1732, and by that of Gandja in 1735, Russia formally restored them to Persia, and for fifty years made no further move. But Catherine II. began to take an intelligent interest in the fate of all the Christian populations subjected to the yoke of her Mussulman neighbours, and in 1783 she agreed to extend her protection to the Georgians of the Caucasus. She did not, it is true, save them from the wrath of Agha Muhammed, the founder of the present Persian dynasty, who, according to a Persian historian, "gave to the Georgian unbelievers a specimen of what they were to expect on the Day of Judgment." But in 1796 she sent an expedition to avenge them. Her death and the accession of Paul I. alone saved Teheran, to which the Kajar ruler of Persia had only recently transferred the capital, from actual occupation by a Russian army. Alexander I. promptly resumed the task which his predecessor had abandoned. The Treaty of Gulistan in October, 1813, merely arrested for a few years the tide of Russian conquest which had already permanently severed from Persia the provinces of Georgia, Mingrelia, Daghestan, Shirwan, Karabagh, and Talish. Constant disputes rose over the new boundaries, and in 1826 hostilities broke out afresh with disastrous results to Persia. By the Treaty of Turkman Chai of February 28th, 1828, she finally ceded to Russia the provinces of Erivan and Nakshivan in addition to those which had already been wrested from her. Within some thirty years Persia had been driven right out of the Caucasus to the south bank of the Araxes, and off the western shores of the Caspian as far as Astera. The frontier between Russia and Persia to the west of the Caspian, as laid down in the Treaty of Turkman Chai,

has remained up to the present day unaltered. But to the east of the Caspian the steady absorption by Russia of the "no man's land," which formerly covered the northern and north-eastern frontiers of Persia, has led to various readjustments of boundaries, always, of course, for the benefit of Russia. In 1838 the island of Ashurada, off the Bay of Astrabad in the Caspian, was occupied by the Russians. In 1869 the Russians having established a military station at Khrasnovodsk on the eastern shores of the Caspian, an agreement was drawn up fixing the River Attrek as the frontier of Persia and Russia for some thirty miles from its mouth, and this was supplemented in 1881 by a formal convention defining the whole boundary of the two countries east of the Caspian.

From Mount Ararat in the west to the Heri Rud River in the east Persia is dominated by the overwhelming military forces of the Russian Empire. On either side of the Caspian Russian troops could be poured at any moment across her land frontiers, from the borders of Turkey to those of Afghanistan. Between the Black Sea and the Caspian Russia has her *Corps d'Armée* of the Caucasus. Its strength on a peace footing amounts altogether to 52,000 men, whereof 38,000 infantry, 2,800 cavalry, and 5,000 artillery with 156 guns, or altogether 46,000 men, are in fixed garrisons, whilst six battalions of infantry, three regiments of Cossacks, and four Cossack batteries with twenty-eight guns, altogether 6,000 men of all arms, are quartered in outlying stations and camps away from the fixed garrisons. To this force must be added, for war purposes, the 63rd, 64th, 65th, and 66th Divisions of the Reserve and local levies. The *Corps d'Armée* of the Caucasus is divided into two corps. The head-

quarters of the 1st Corps are at Alexandropol, where the 39th Division of Infantry with its brigade of artillery is permanently stationed, whilst its Cossack cavalry is thrown forward to Erivan. Alexandropol is 138 miles distant from and south of Tiflis, where are the headquarters of the 2nd Caucasus Corps. It is only forty-eight miles from Alexandropol to Erivan, in close proximity to the Persian frontier, whilst the great fortress of Kars lies about forty miles west. The Trans-Caucasian Railway from Tiflis, a purely strategic railway, has been constructed through very difficult and mountainous country to Alexandropol, with a branch line to Kars, and on to Erivan in the direction of the Persian frontier. It is now being rapidly extended from Erivan towards the Araxes, and from its terminus at Julfa on the frontier it will be an easy march of only eighty miles along the carriage-road, for which the Russians have secured the concession from the Persian Government, into Tabriz, the capital of Azerbaijan, and the most important city in North-Western Persia, where the Veli Ahd, or Heir Apparent to the Persian throne, now holds his court, as did his father, the present Shah, until his accession. East of Azerbaijan stretches the province of Ghilan, along the south-west shores of the Caspian. In this direction again the Russians have carried out surveys for a railway from Baku southwards along the coast through Lenkoran to the Persian frontier at Astera, which will give them direct access into Ghilan. The project has been for the present dropped or postponed, but it will certainly be put sooner or later into execution.

The Caspian itself is a Russian lake in the fullest sense of the term, and would doubtless in any case have been so, even if Persia had not been compelled as far

back as the Treaty of Turkman Chai in 1828 to subscribe to an engagement, under which she is debarred from flying her flag on its waters. The monopoly which Russia thus obtained for her ships of war was further secured for her merchant flag by a decree of the Imperial Council of State at St. Petersburg issued November 24th, 1869, prohibiting the establishment of companies for the navigation of the Caspian by any but Russian subjects and the purchase of any shares in such companies by foreigners. To-day, in addition to a small flotilla of despatch vessels and gunboats, there is in the Caspian a considerable fleet of mail and merchant steamers under the Russian flag, many of them with a large carrying capacity, employed in the Baku petroleum trade, which would be available at any moment for the transport of troops. The island of Ashurada, in the south-east corner of the Caspian, just off the coast of Mazenderan, is occupied by the Russians as a naval station.

East of the Caspian the Russian forces along the Persian frontier form part of the Turkestan *Corps d'Armée* of a peace strength of 22,000 men with thirty-eight guns. Of the two corps into which the Turkestan *Corps d'Armée* is divided, the 1st has its headquarters at Tashkend, and may be regarded mainly as a Central Asian police force. The 2nd Corps has its headquarters at Ashkabad, the military and administrative capital of Trans-Caspia, and the greater part of it is distributed along the Trans-Caspian Railway, which skirts the Persian frontier more or less closely for some 200 miles. As far as I have been able to ascertain, it consists, on a peace footing, of the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th brigades of Turkestan Rifles, two brigades of Trans-Caspian Cossacks, two railway battalions, four batteries

of horse and field artillery, and one mountain battery, the whole distributed apparently in about equal proportions between fixed garrisons and outlying camps and stations. Its most advanced post on the Caspian is at Chikishliar, whence a few years ago, when disturbances occurred at Ashkabad, the capital of Mazenderan, in connection with quarantine measures, a Russian force was despatched to protect the Russian Consulate. It marched into Ashkabad within three days, and remained four months in possession, just to drive home the lesson. Further east the great province of Khorasan lies equally at Russia's mercy. From Ashkabad, which is only twenty miles distant from the Persian frontier, a carriage-road, for which the Russians, of course, hold a concession, opens up an easy route through Kuchan to Meshed, the capital and holy city of Khorasan, which the Russians moreover now equally dominate from the east along the valley of the Heri Rud.

Whilst with all the resources of a great military empire behind it, and linked up with its base by a great railway system, which is being steadily extended and perfected, the Russian Army holds every strategic point that commands the northern provinces of Persia, what has Persia to show for the protection of such a long and vulnerable line of frontier? It is no exaggeration to say that with the exception of one small brigade, to which I shall refer presently, Persia has absolutely nothing in the shape of an army which could even harass the movements of a hostile army. On paper the Persian Army numbers about 80,000 men. In reality, barely half that number could be mustered, and if they were mustered, they would merely swell what Lord Curzon aptly described as "a loose aggregation of

slovenly units," which in war must "degenerate on the least provocation into a rabble." Now and then reforms are talked about, but they come to nothing, and the Persian soldier, ill-disciplined, ill-officered, ill-equipped, and ill-paid, even when he gets his pay, is nothing more than a coolie in a tattered uniform, who can far more often be seen doing odd jobs in the streets as a manual labourer than performing any of the duties of military service. The sentries who are supposed to be "on guard" at the foreign Legations and Consulates are only too glad to be more usefully and lucratively employed in weeding the garden, or in "fagging" for the servants. Yet Persia unquestionably possesses the raw material of an excellent army. The experiment of working up that material into an efficient force is, in fact, being already made, and the result is the one small brigade to which I alluded just now. But that solitary exception is not one which need cause Russia any apprehension. For the Persian "Cossack" brigade has been formed, and is officered, by officers of the Russian Army.

In bygone times English, French, and Austrian officers have in turns taken in hand the task of re-organising the Persian Army, but owing to the lack of adequate support, if for no other reason, their efforts invariably ended in more or less ignominious failure. Russian officers were the last to appear upon the scene, and their success has been due, not only to the powerful backing upon which they could depend, but to the business-like fashion in which they went to work. They never attempted to tackle the Persian Army as a whole. Acting upon the French proverb, *Qui trop embrasse, mal étreint*, they confined themselves to the organisation of a small force, entirely under their own

control, which they could handle and mould to their own satisfaction. The whole brigade of Persian "Cossacks" consists of four regiments of cavalry, one of them called a Guards regiment, and of two battalions of field artillery. These regiments are not kept at their full strength, and the brigade only musters altogether about 2,000 men, originally recruited at random, but now chiefly drawn from one large tribe of Persian nomads. They are armed with Berdan rifles and Russian guns, and though they do not present on parade the spick-and-span appearance of our native Indian troops, all authorities concur in describing them as smart, alert, well-drilled, and well-disciplined. There are only three Russian officers attached to the brigade, but they have succeeded in training Persian officers and non-commissioned officers, as well as in drilling the rank and file. It is, however, only within the last few years that the brigade has attained its present high standard of efficiency, and this is largely due to the remarkable personality of its commander, Major-General Kosagowsky, whom the Tsar raised to that rank in the Russian Army, over the heads of a number of senior officers, in acknowledgment of the excellent work he had done at Teheran. Standing 6 feet 3 inches or 4 inches in his boots and massively built, with a strong and energetic countenance, he looks every inch a born leader of men. A splendid organiser, he has thrown himself heart and soul into his work. He has personally designed and superintended the construction of the spacious new barracks overlooking the great Meidan or central square of Teheran, as well as the remodelling of some old Persian barracks adjoining them, and both men and horses are now housed in a way which had never before entered into the wildest

dreams of a Persian soldier. By the general's kind permission I was allowed to visit every part of the buildings, and in that land of universal dirt and untidiness it was a pleasure to see such order and cleanliness in the men's quarters, as well as in the workshops and in the stables, while the smart, soldierly bearing of the men and their fine physique and general air of manliness and contentment showed what admirable materials for an army Persia still possesses. No doubt part of the secret of General Kosagowsky's success is that the men are well fed, and, above all, regularly paid. On this point the General stands no nonsense, and, owing to the peculiar relations in which the Persian Government stands to the Russian Bank established a few years ago at Teheran, he has little difficulty in having his own way. He frames his own Budget, and he insists upon its requirements being complied with. If the Persian Treasury procrastinates, he draws upon the Russian Bank, and when the latter presents the bill, ways and means have to be found to meet it. Moreover, the General's position is one of complete independence. He is not in any way subordinate to the Persian Minister of War, but is under the orders of General Kuropatkin, the Russian Minister of War. His position, as far as the Cossack brigade is concerned, is in fact very similar to that which the British Serdar of the Egyptian Army occupies in Egypt. Even his men are withdrawn from the ordinary jurisdiction of the Persian War Office, and a special department of the Persian Foreign Office deals with any question concerning them.

The Shah is under deep obligations to General Kosagowsky, to whose influence the ease with which his Majesty made good his rights to the succession

after the assassination of his father must in no small measure be attributed. Muzaffer-ed-Din hesitated at first to assume the burden of what may well have appeared to him a *damnosa hereditos*. The tragic circumstances of his father's death were calculated to unnerve a stronger man than he has ever shown himself to be. He suspected his brothers, the Zill-es-Sultan, who was Governor of Isfahan, and the Naïb-es-Sultaneh, who was Minister of War, and he insisted upon obtaining a written pledge of their loyalty before he seated himself on the throne. British influence secured the Zill-es-Sultan's adhesion, which he indeed gave with every appearance of goodwill. The Naïb-es-Sultaneh, probably out of sheer fright of committing himself to anybody or anything, showed more reluctance, and General Kosagowsky is believed to have used very peremptory arguments in overcoming it. When Muzaffer-ed-Din was at last solemnly installed, the Russian General's drawn sword played a not inconspicuous part in quickening the loyal sentiments of his Majesty's lieges. That the Shah should have permanently at his disposal such an efficient force as the Cossack brigade goes far to assure the stability of his throne.

On the other hand, as the Shah must be perfectly well aware that Russia's interest in the stability of his throne is conditioned upon his subserviency to her, it is obvious that the existence of such a force, which has been practically created and is maintained solely by Russian influence, adds tremendously to the prestige as well as to the power of Russia, and not merely in Teheran. Such is the confidence the Russians are now able to place in the efficiency and devotion of their

Persian Cossacks that they no longer find it necessary to keep them always under their own eyes. Detachments are sent away for a time into distant provinces. There are some, for instance, in the north-eastern province of Khorasan; there are some in Arabistan, the south-western province which marches with the Turkish vilayet of Baghdad. On my way down to Isfahan I met a party proceeding to Yezd and Kerman in South-Eastern Persia. They are often appointed to act as guards or escort to provincial governors, and as such they are in a position not only to collect a great deal of useful intelligence for the Russian headquarters in Teheran, but to exercise in the same interest considerable local influence. Every one of these men carries to remote parts of the Persian kingdom not only the story of Russian might, but the praise of Russian methods; and in this case the praise is not undeserved. Nor would it be fair to forget that the presence of such a force in the hands of Russian officers may sometimes be a guarantee for the maintenance of public security which enures to the benefit of foreign residents of all nationalities, as was clearly seen two years ago, during the bread riots provoked by the audacious attempt of the Governor of Teheran to engineer a corner in wheat. Whether, in the event of a great crisis, the Cossacks would be proof against an appeal to religious sentiment remains to be seen, for the influence of the *Mullahs* is still considerable. Whether they would remain at all costs true to their salt would probably depend, in a great measure, upon the personality of the Russian officer then in command. General Kosagowsky's term of service in Persia expired last spring. It is difficult to replace a man of his stamp, and Colonel Zuboff, the

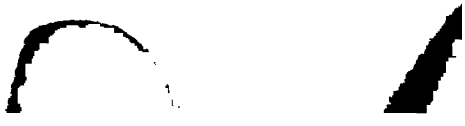
distinguished young officer who, at least temporarily, succeeded him, is of a different type. But the Cossack brigade will anyhow remain a significant and permanent emblem of Russian military ascendency in Teheran, which, short of a Russian army of occupation actually quartered in the Persian capital, could hardly be established on firmer and more durable foundations.

CHAPTER VI

RUSSIAN ASCENDENCY IN TEHERAN: THE POWER OF THE PURSE

BESIDES the power of the sword Russia wields at the present moment in Teheran with at least equal might the power of the purse. The methods by which she has acquired it are similar to those which she has employed with so much success in China, and they aptly illustrate the intimate connection which exists between the Far Eastern and the Middle Eastern questions. The activity of Russian diplomacy in Teheran during the last few years has constantly kept time with, and in many instances assumed exactly the same shape as, the activity which it has displayed during the same period in Peking. In both cases its guiding principles are the same, namely, that by bolstering up a weak and corrupt Oriental monarchy, and securing its complete subserviency by a judicious combination of forceful pressure and pecuniary suasion, the ends of Russian policy can be, perhaps more slowly, but more surely attained, and at infinitely less cost and risk than by open and violent aggression. Nothing can be more instructive than the way in which history has been repeating, or rather duplicating, itself in Peking and in Teheran.

In Peking the first manifestation of the ascendency



she had gained over the Chinese Government by her intervention at the close of the Japanese war, when, with the help of France and Germany, she ousted Japan from the Liaotong Peninsula for her own ulterior purposes, was the loan which she compelled China to accept in June, 1895. The Customs revenue of China was still intact, and being practically under Western administration, it offered ample security for a loan concluded on ordinary business lines, which would have enabled her to meet the Japanese war indemnity. Negotiations were actually proceeding with the representatives of leading European firms, whose joint co-operation would have safeguarded the financial independence of China. Russia peremptorily vetoed the acceptance of those proposals and thrust the Franco-Russian loan upon the Chinese, as it were, at the point of the bayonet. It was a Franco-Russian loan in this sense, that Paris supplied the money, but it was the Tsar's signature which constituted the guarantee. It was towards Russia and not towards France that China found herself placed in a position of financial dependence, whilst Russia at the same time obtained a first lien upon the revenue of the Chinese Customs, to which no great power contributes a smaller fraction than Russia herself. The inevitable results were not slow to follow. A Russian bank—euphemistically called the Russo-Chinese Bank—was established in China, which speedily developed into a regular branch of the Russian Ministry of Finance, and the Russians obtained in the following year a concession for the construction of the "Eastern Chinese Railway" to be connected with the Siberian Railway, which from those modest beginnings has expanded into a charter for the occupation of the whole of Manchuria and the creation of a great Russian

Viceroyalty firmly entrenched behind the guns of Port Arthur.

I have thought it necessary briefly to recall these circumstances because Russia is so clearly applying in Persia the methods which she has found so successful in China. Into the causes which have driven Persia to have recourse to foreign loans I shall have occasion to refer later on. Suffice it for the present to say that when Muzaffer-ed-Din succeeded to the throne, he found the Treasury at a much lower ebb than he had expected, and the enormous expenditure which a succession always involves in Persia very soon depleted it. In 1898 the Persian Government began to feel the pinch of poverty so severely that, when the Shah proposed to undertake a journey to Europe, there were no funds available for the purpose, and still less to meet heavy arrears of payment he could hardly leave the country without discharging. It was therefore decided to try and raise a considerable loan abroad. The Treasury had already, in 1892, borrowed £500,000 on the security of the Customs of the Persian Gulf from the Imperial Bank of Persia, a British institution founded with a great flourish of trumpets when Sir Henry Drummond-Wolff was at Teheran, for the purpose of fulfilling some at least of the functions of a state bank. The proceeds of that loan had gone to the payment of compensation for the abolition of the Persian Tobacco Monopoly—an ill-starred undertaking which, like the Persian Mining Corporation, had served mainly to give Persia a bad name in English financial circles. Unfortunately the Imperial Bank had also suffered, quite unfairly, from the discredit into which all Persian ventures had fallen, and as soon as, at the request of the Persian Government, it began to feel the pulse of the London money

market, it became clear that without energetic support from the British Government there was little prospect of success for a Persian loan; but in spite of the urgent advice of Sir Mortimer Durand, then British Minister at Teheran, official circles in London hesitated and procrastinated. The security offered was unquestionably adequate, namely, the Customs revenues of Southern Persia; and in view of our important commercial and political interests in that region, it was eminently desirable that their control should not pass into other hands than ours. Whether it was necessary to insist upon immediate control of the Custom Houses, as the British capitalists demanded, instead of the eventual control which the Persians were ready to concede in case of default, is a disputable point. It was ostensibly on this rock that the negotiations were shipwrecked, though in return for a small advance of £50,000 to meet its most pressing requirements, the Persian Government had in the meantime consented to the Imperial Bank placing its own agents in charge of the Custom Houses at Bushire and Kermanshah. The delay caused by discussions on this point at any rate gave time for other influences to be exerted to defeat the negotiations. Whether Russian diplomacy went to the length of explicitly vetoeing the loan in the same way as, a few months before, it had vetoed at Peking the loan which was offered to China in January, 1898, under the auspices of the British Government, it is difficult to say. The pressure that Russia was able to bring to bear indirectly upon the Shah through her own friends at Court was possibly sufficient for her purposes. The negotiations were broken off. The penury of the Persian Treasury went on increasing. The Amin-ed-Dowleh, who was suspected of British

leanings, fell into disgrace, and the Atabeg-Azam became once more Prime Minister in his stead under the powerful patronage of Russia.

On the model of the Russo-Chinese Bank, and destined to become quite as undisguisedly a branch of the Russian State Bank under the immediate control of the Ministry of Finance at St. Petersburg, a Russian bank—the Banque des Prêts, now called the Banque d'Escompte de Perse—had been opened at Teheran, and through its agency Russia, who had in the meantime rejected a suggestion for a joint Anglo-Russian loan to Persia, agreed in 1900 to give the Persian Government a loan of £2,400,000, represented by bonds guaranteed by the Russian Government and bearing interest at 5 per cent., with a sinking fund—capital and interest secured on the revenue of the Persian Customs generally, with the exception of the Persian Gulf ports. Whilst the Russians waived, except in the event of default, the right of control over the Customs upon which the British negotiators had insisted, they made it a condition that the proceeds of the new loan should be devoted, in the first instance, to the repayment of the balance of the British loan contracted in 1892 to provide compensation for the withdrawal of the ill-starred tobacco monopoly, and to redeeming the indebtedness of the Persian Treasury to the only two foreign banks in Teheran—the Imperial Bank of Persia, a British institution, and the International Bank of Commerce of Moscow, a private Russian firm, which could not attempt to compete with M. Witte's Bank. Further stipulations provided that Persia should contract no financial obligations in the shape of a new loan from any foreign power for a period of ten years, and also that she should not

lower her Customs duties, except with the consent of Russia. This loan, I should add, has never been publicly issued, nor has any information been made public as to the purposes, beyond those I have already mentioned, to which it has been applied. The relief that it afforded to the Persian Treasury was of short duration. It was issued nominally at 86⅔, with a commission of 1⅔ per cent. Probably, therefore, when the outstanding balance of the Tobacco Monopoly loan, amounting to £400,000, and the other bank debts had been paid off, and commission and other charges deducted, the Treasury was left with little more than one million sterling to meet its most pressing needs. That sum was, at any rate, very soon exhausted, and towards the end of 1901 a further loan was contracted on the same security and through the same agency for another 16,000,000 roubles, or over one and a half million sterling. Even less is known as to the terms upon which this second loan was made, but the period during which Persia undertakes to contract no loans from other powers than Russia, without the consent of the latter, was extended to 1912, and, as a condition precedent, an agreement had been arrived at between Persia and Russia for a revision of the Persian Customs tariff. The proceeds of the second loan have not perhaps been quite so rapidly exhausted as those of the first, but in neither case has a penny been applied to any visibly useful purpose. It was stated in native circles at Teheran in the autumn of 1902—and the report was generally credited—that, on his way back from Europe, the Shah had obtained the promise of another loan from Russia, and that it was in acknowledgment of this fresh favour his Majesty had spoken in such warm terms, at an official banquet given to him

at Kursk, of the close ties which bind Persia to Russia, and which he hoped would bind the two countries still more intimately in the future. The promise, if it was given, does not however appear to have been yet fulfilled, or, at least, only very partially. The Persians, at any rate, only admit a total indebtedness to Russia of 20,000,000 tomans, or £4,000,000, which is the amount represented by the two above-mentioned loans. Even so, the significance of the financial dependence in which Persia has placed herself towards Russia in the course of such a very few years can hardly be overrated. It cannot be fully appreciated until we have taken a survey of the economic and financial position of Persia as a whole; but when a weak Oriental state, whose annual revenue only amounts to about one and a half million sterling, borrows from a powerful European neighbour, and spends within the short space of three years, sums which almost equal the whole of its revenues during the same period, and has absolutely nothing to show in the way of remunerative expenditure for the debt which it is piling up, the ultimate result must spell ruin.

It is often assumed in England that the financial policy by which Russia has reduced Persia to this state of dependence upon the Russian Treasury is directed solely towards building up her political ascendency. If that were so, those who contend that her political ascendency is not detrimental to British interests would be justified in regarding it with indifference. But this assumption ignores another equally important aspect of the situation. The financial policy of the Russian Government in Persia certainly promotes the ends which the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs may be specially supposed to have in view, but it is immediately

inspired and controlled by the Russian Minister of Finance, and it is directed towards building up the commercial supremacy quite as much as the political supremacy of Russia in Northern Persia. It is, in fact, merely part of the comprehensive system of policy to which M. Witte devoted his great abilities and untiring energy throughout his tenure of office. The impetus which he had given to the development of Russian industry by intensified methods of protection made it absolutely necessary for him to find new markets for the products of Russian industry. The severe crisis through which Russia was passing as a consequence of overproduction under artificial conditions only served to stimulate his activity. In Persia he discovered a market in which the advantage of geographical proximity goes far to counterbalance the disadvantage at which such a hothouse growth as Russian industry is apt to find itself placed when in competition with the industry of other countries, and especially with British industry. If to geographical proximity he could superadd other advantages, he might well hope to turn the scales so completely in favour of Russian industry as to drive its competitors altogether out of the field. That its chief competitor happens here to be British industry, and that commercial rivalry therefore runs on the same lines as political rivalry, is merely an incident which no doubt adds zest to the game.

What is the position, and what are the trump cards which Russia appears to hold? The chief routes by which British trade reaches Teheran are, by the Persian Gulf, the Bushire-Shiraz-Isfahan route, the Baghdad-Kermanshah route, and the new route *viâ* Muhammerah, the Karun river, and the Ahwaz-Isfahan road; and by

SUSPENSION BRIDGE ON THE "LYNCH ROAD" FROM AHWAZ TO ISFAHAN (p. 146)

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the Black Sea, the Trebizond-Tabriz route. The time of actual transit through Persia to Teheran by these routes ranges from seventy to one hundred and twenty days, and the cost from £18 to £26 per ton. On the other hand, the shortest road for the import of Russian goods into the Teheran district is from Enzeli *viâ* Resht and Kazvin, at rates varying from £6 to £8 per ton, the time of transit being from fifteen to twenty days. In these figures we see at a glance the benefit which Russian trade reaps from the outlay of Russian money on the construction of the road from Resht to Teheran. Nor is this by any means the only, or even the chief, avenue Russia has for her trade with Northern Persia, which enters the western provinces from Trans-Caucasia, and Khorasan from Ashkabad on the Trans-Caspian Railway.

But the advantages of geographical proximity, supplemented by a judicious outlay of Russian capital on improved means of communication, were not enough to satisfy M. Witte. Until he was able to secure a revision of the Persian tariff, by which the duties were to be manipulated as far as possible in favour of Russian trade, he found means to counteract the competition of British goods in the Persian market by special railway rates for Russian products intended for Persia, and by an elaborate system of bounties paid by the Russian Treasury on all Russian goods exported into Persia. Great secrecy has been preserved with regard to the precise amount of these bounties, but they are believed in most cases to work out, roughly, to from 15 to 20 per cent. *ad valorem*, and in some cases to much more. The Russian manufacturer, it must be admitted, has done apparently all that lies in his power to show himself worthy of the support he receives from

the State. According to all accounts, he neglects no opportunity of cultivating the tastes of his Persian clients, and for variety, if not always for quality, he often succeeds in producing articles which are much better suited to the Persian market than his British competitor, whose intense conservatism will not stoop to any departure from time-honoured custom. Fashions vary in every province of Persia, and the Russians do their best to meet all their different requirements, whilst we seek to impose upon the whole country our conception of what ought to be the fashion all over it.

Russia has not, however, confined herself to the ordinary methods of promoting a state-aided industry. The Russian Bank at Teheran plays in this connection a scarcely less important part than in connection with the loans by which Russia has got so firm a grip on the Persian Treasury. The predominant position which the Banque d'Escompte de Perse has acquired as the creditor of the Persian State, it uses, without the slightest disguise, for ousting British enterprise. Not only do its relations with the Persian Treasury give it special facilities for manipulating exchange on Europe for the benefit of Russian trade—a most important factor in all commercial transactions—but the large profits which it derives from its loan operations in Persia—Russia lends to Persia at a rate which works out to about 6 per cent. money which she can herself borrow in Paris at 4 per cent.—enable it also to carry on other operations which no bank, run on purely business lines, could possibly undertake. Loans are made to Persian customers on consignments of goods, so long as those goods come from Russia, on terms which simply set ordinary business principles at defiance, and facilities which they would find nowhere else are granted to new

customers on the express condition that they shall import their merchandise from Russia, or, at any rate, not from Great Britain. It is in competition especially with the Imperial Bank of Persia, the only British institution in the North, and one of almost vital importance to British trade, that these methods are practised in the most barefaced manner. The incurable apathy of the Persians and the growth of Russian ascendency have materially reduced the Bank's opportunities of usefulness. The one important privilege it enjoys is the issue of bank-notes—a privilege of which the value is much impaired by the large specie reserve it is compelled to maintain, not only in Teheran, but in its provincial branches, owing to the difficulty of making any large remittances of such a bulky currency as Persian silver in a country where transportation has to be computed, not in hours, but in weeks. Runs on the bank have already been engineered—hitherto unsuccessfully—in the hope of bringing about, by the sudden presentation of large numbers of bank-notes, a momentary suspension of specie payment, which would have furnished a pretext for procuring the revocation of its charter. From the Persian authorities, who frequently even wink at the evasion of the bank-note privilege of the bank by native corporations in the provinces, little or no assistance can be looked for. Beyond sundry advances, such as an impecunious Oriental treasury always stands in need of, the only service for which the Government still relies upon the Imperial Bank is the transmission to Teheran of Customs revenue collected in outlying districts where the Russian bank has at present no agents. Nevertheless, though the larger objects for which the Imperial Bank was created

have been so far defeated, the industry and perseverance of its staff, and especially the tact and ability of its chief manager, Mr. Rabino, whose personal influence with the Persians and with foreigners of all nationalities has been a most valuable factor, have in other respects maintained its credit and position. But the tactics which the Russian bank has adopted are hard to contend with, for the latter, backed by the Russian Ministry of Finance, has evidently made it one of its chief objects to drive its British competitor out of the field. For this purpose it is prepared to underbid it or outbid it, as the case may be, in every direction. A foreigner—not an Englishman—in an independent position at Teheran, who was in no way connected with business, told me that, when he wanted to draw upon Europe, the Russian bank was always prepared to give him a quotation fractionally more favourable than that at which the Imperial Bank had offered to do business. The Russian bank invariably asked him what rates the British bank quoted, and gave its own quotation accordingly. It is the same thing with loans, advances, discount, etc. The British bank has to consult the interests of its shareholders, and cannot afford to work at a loss. The Russian bank consults only the requirements of the policy it has been created to carry out, and is quite prepared to incur losses in promoting it.

Such are the agencies through which Russia hopes to hold the central government of Persia—and with it the whole of Northern Persia at least—financially as well as militarily, in the hollow of her hand. The position of M. Struebe, the director of the Banque d'Escompte de Perse at Teheran, is the exact counterpart of that which M. Pokotiloff made for himself at

Peking as the director of the Russo-Chinese Bank. M. Struebe, a financial expert of remarkable ability, is the nominee and confidential agent of M. Witte, and corresponds directly with the Russian Ministry of Finance, just as the officer commanding the Persian Cossacks corresponds directly with the Russian Ministry of War. It is not surprising, therefore, to hear it whispered that the diplomatic representative of Russia at Teheran feels his position to be somewhat overshadowed by his two powerful coadjutors. Possibly M. Arghyropoulo, who, when I was in Teheran, had just been transferred to another post, was not the man to assert himself, and his successor, M. Vlassow, who had hitherto represented Russia in Abyssinia, may be better qualified to play the part of "the masterful Resident," which properly belongs, according to the Russian Press, to a Minister Plenipotentiary of the Tsar at the Persian Court. Perhaps, after all, the Russian Government is wiser than the Russian Press in assigning, as it has hitherto done, to its diplomatic representative the more congenial task of supplying the *suaviter in modo* whilst the *fortiter in re* is driven home through other channels. It has, at any rate, every reason to be satisfied with the results that have hitherto attended its threefold representation at Teheran.

It would be easy to enumerate other indications of the paramount influence of Russia in the Persian capital. Teheran has grown considerably of late years, and in spite of the tawdriness of its buildings and the hollow pretence of its long line of battlemented walls, its broad, shaded avenues and stately gardens, and, above all, the noble amphitheatre of mountains which look down upon it from the north, give it a certain *cachet* of stateliness. But the red

Russian blouses of the Cossacks at the gates of all the most important buildings and public departments, and, in the foreign quarter especially, the prevalence of notices and inscriptions in the Russian language, show clearly the predominance of the Russian element. During my stay a new development specially calculated to appeal to the Oriental imagination had taken place. The right of coinage is one which has always been in the East one of the chief attributes of sovereignty, and though the Persian Mint is notoriously inadequate to supply the needs of the country, the late Shah would never listen to any suggestion for having part of the silver currency struck abroad. Handsome 5-kran pieces, struck in Russia, or, more probably, for Russian account in Belgium, had just made their appearance in the bazaars of Teheran, and such is the state of the Persian silver currency that the new coins were welcomed with great satisfaction by the trading community. But the people were not unnaturally strengthened in their fatalistic belief that the sovereign rights of Persia were gradually passing into the hands of her mighty northern neighbour.

CHAPTER VII

BRITISH TRADE AND RUSSIAN COMPETITION

THE foreign trade of Persia resolves itself mainly into British trade, of which the trade to and from British India forms a very important part, and Russian trade. The trade between other Western countries and Persia is relatively insignificant, and the trade carried on between the adjoining provinces of Persia and Turkey is only of local importance. Unfortunately, the statistics available for dealing with this subject have not hitherto been very trustworthy. The Board of Trade returns include only the direct trade between the United Kingdom and Persia, and thus take no account of the large indirect trade from these islands, let alone the trade of India and other parts of the Empire with Persia. The British consular reports have hitherto furnished the best information available, but they have never laid claim to absolute accuracy, as in the absence of official data the returns they give have been necessarily incomplete in some cases, whilst in others they are apt to overlap. Nevertheless, from the more than usually exhaustive reports recently published from the British Consulates in the Persian Gulf ports, through which the bulk of our trade passes, at Kermanshah, which is the centre of the considerable trade carried on with Western Persia through Baghdad,

and in Meshed, which may be regarded as a terminus of the new overland trade-route from India *viâ* Quetta and Seistan, a fairly complete estimate of British trade with Persia can be compiled for 1902. Only for Tabriz, through which British goods still enter Northern Persia from the Black Sea, are the figures for 1902 not yet available, and one must fall back upon previous estimates of the value of British trade by that route :—

BRITISH IMPORTS INTO PERSIA 1901–2.

	From United Kingdom.	From India.		Total from British Empire.
	£	£		£
Bushire . .	637,433	261,701	.....	899,134
Lingah . .	.....	367,302	.....	367,302
Bunder Abbas .	130,228	187,277	.....	317,505
Muhammerah .	40,787	56,193	.....	96,980
Kermanshah .	627,675	75,064	.....	702,739
Meshed . .	18,060*	27,902†	.....	45,962
	1,454,183	975,439		2,429,622

BRITISH EXPORTS FROM PERSIA 1901–2.

	To United Kingdom.	To India.	To Hong-kong.‡	Total to British Empire.
	£	£	£	£
Bushire . .	90,526	85,208	119,695	295,429
Lingah . .	4,960	506,614	.....	511,574
Bunder Abbas .	8,994	68,480	3,200	80,674
Muhammerah .	34,879	63,472	41,947	140,298
Kermanshah .	Not set	forth se	parately	85,000
Meshed . .	.....	6,608	.....	6,608
	139,359	730,382	164,842	1,119,583

* *Viâ* Tabriz. † *Viâ* Quetta and Seistan. ‡ Opium for China.

If we add £200,000 on the basis of former estimates for the British trade *viâ* Tabriz, we arrive at an aggregate value of over £3,700,000 for the trade of 1902 between Persia and the British Empire. This would not compare unfavourably with Lord Curzon's estimate of £3,000,000 in 1889. But it is impossible to ignore the statistics which are now forthcoming from an entirely new source, namely, the Belgian Administration of the Persian Customs, and the picture they present of our commercial position in Persia is unhappily much less flattering, both positively and relatively. According to them, British trade in 1901–2 only amounted altogether, excluding the trade of Muhammerah, which had not yet been included within the operations of the Belgian Customs, to £2,350,000, of which £1,895,000 were imports into Persia, and less than half a million exports from Persia. Even if we add our own consular figures for British imports and exports *viâ* Muhammerah, the total barely reaches £2,600,000 for the whole of our Persian trade, or one million less than the British official estimates.

Still more unsatisfactory are the Belgian Customs statistics if we are to accept their evidence as to the relative position of British trade and of that of our chief competitor in the Persian market. Russian imports are set down at £2,031,000 and Russian exports at £1,600,000, or altogether £3,631,000—just one million sterling in excess of the Customs returns of British trade.* If we compare these figures with Lord Curzon's estimate of 1889, which put down the Russian import and export trade with Persia at about two millions

* More detailed statistics of Russian trade with Persia, compiled from Russian sources, which have reached me too late to be noticed in this chapter, will be found in the Appendices.

sterling, Russian trade has increased 80 per cent. within thirteen years, whilst British trade has decreased 15 per cent. Even if we do not accept the figures prepared by the Belgian Customs Administration as absolutely conclusive—and as far as British trade is concerned it is difficult to do so in view of our own Consular reports—it must, I fear, be admitted that Russian competition has already wrested from us the commercial supremacy we have hitherto enjoyed, and for many years, almost unchallenged, in Persia.

Considering the immense activity which Russia has displayed of recent years in Persia, the rapid strides she has made in this direction are not surprising. Russian trade already enjoys, in addition to the initial advantage of close proximity to the markets of Northern Persia, the benefit, first, of relatively easy access to them over roads the construction and maintenance of which would have been impossible without the financial and political support of the Russian Government; secondly, of an elaborate system of special rates to the frontier and bounties on export of which the Russian Treasury is willing to bear the burden, recouping itself the while by profitable loan transactions with Persia; and, thirdly, of the vigorous pressure which Russia's political and financial ascendency enables her to exert through the channel of a powerful bank, which is in reality nothing less than a branch of the Russian Ministry of Finance. Fierce as, under such conditions, the competition to which Russia subjects British trade has already become, its full pressure will only begin to be felt under the new conditions arising out of the abrogation of the provisions of the Treaty of Turkman Chai, which until early in 1903 governed the trade relations of all foreign countries (except Turkey) with

Persia. The sequence of events which has enabled Russia to proceed to a revision of her tariff relations with Persia is instructive.

The only notable reform which has been carried out of recent years in the Persian administration is the reorganisation of the Customs service by a staff of Belgian Customs officials, lent for the purpose to the Persian Government. When the pressure of financial stringency first drove the Shah to contemplate a loan from European capitalists, it became evident that the only available security he had to offer was the revenue of the Persian Customs, and so long as the old system prevailed of farming out the different custom-houses, the security was not unexceptionable. The Persian Government was brought to realise that its value would be considerably enhanced by remodelling the Customs service on European lines; and about five years ago application was made to Belgium as a "neutral" state for the loan of the necessary *personnel*. The King of the Belgians thoroughly appreciates the value to his own country of the opportunities afforded by such services, in countries where there is keen rivalry between the Great Powers, as, for instance, in China, where Belgium has been able to play an important and profitable part as the *prête-nom* of Russia and France for the acquisition of railway concessions in the Yang-Tsze Valley and adjoining regions, which neither of those Powers could have invaded at the time without creating a dangerous amount of political friction. That, in the light of recent experience at Peking, Russia should have welcomed the introduction of a new Belgian element into Persia was natural enough, but that the British Government should have encouraged it, is hard to understand. Credit must, at any rate, be given to

King Leopold for the selection of highly-competent officials to perform the honourable task assigned to them in Persia. M. Naus, the present Belgian Director-General of Customs, and the staff that his predecessor, who died shortly after arrival in Persia, brought from Europe, have done excellent administrative work, and the fact that they are merely seconded for service in Persia, and can at any time return to their own posts in Belgium, gives them a position, or, at least, an appearance, of independence here which the foreigners of all nationalities who have from time to time drifted into the Persian service have generally lacked. Nevertheless, the success which has attended the reorganisation of the Persian Customs would probably not have been so remarkable as it has proved if, on the one hand, Russia had not, from the moment when she made her first loan to Persia, found it to her own interest to promote the improvement of the security on which she had lent her money, and, on the other hand, the Belgians had not displayed an intelligent readiness to accept Russian guidance and to deserve Russian protection.

Towards the close of 1900, after a couple of years' preliminary study and probation, M. Naus was able to point to an increase of 60 per cent. in the real revenue of the Customs over the returns of the last financial year under the farming system, and to propose a complete scheme of reorganisation. Under the old system the actual duties paid on importation on the frontier were supplemented by a number of imposts levied more or less irregularly in transit into the markets of the interior, or in the shape of octroi at the place of destination. Indeed, the duties paid on importation were often considerably lower than the 5 per cent. duty sanctioned by the Treaty of Turkman Chai.

Most of the custom-houses were farmed out by the Central Government, or administered by local chiefs subject to certain remittances to Teheran. The enterprising farmer of one custom-house frequently endeavoured to attract trade to his own port by offering to admit goods below the treaty rate, and in many places these reductions or rebates had in the course of time acquired a semi-legal sanction by mere prescription. On the other hand, as the foreign trader, when once his goods were landed in Persia, was to some extent protected against the exaction of transit dues and octrois, he was often placed in a better position than the Persian importer. M. Naus proposed to do away with these abuses by abolishing altogether the old transit dues and octrois on internal as well as on foreign trade, subject to a small transportation tax of 22 shahis, or less than 5*d*. per load on foreign goods for or from the interior; and at the same time he undertook to increase the legitimate revenue of the Treasury by insisting upon the uniform payment of the full 5 per cent. duty at every port or land frontier station on the value of all imports and exports. The reforms laid down by M. Naus were adopted by the Persian Government with such unwonted promptitude as to suggest very powerful outside backing, and within the next twelve months the event had already justified his most sanguine prognostications; for, while both internal and foreign trade was relieved of the old irregular imposts and benefited by the uniformity of the new system, the net revenue yielded by the Customs in 1901 amounted to about 1,600,000 tomans, or nearly £320,000, as against little more than three-fifths of that sum under the farming system.

In so far as Russian influence was exerted to promote these important reforms, it unquestionably conferred a considerable boon upon the trade of all foreign nations as well as upon the internal trade of Persia. But this was not the sole object of Russia in lending her support to the Belgium Customs administration. In Teheran and in the North, where her ascendency was too firmly established to require adventitious aid, the Belgians were careful to preserve outward appearances, and in spite of occasional complaints, they did not on the whole show any systematic unfairness in their dealings with foreign traders of whatever nationality. In the South and in the East, however, the part they had to play was a very different one. Russian interests in those regions not having yet materialised, the Belgian Customs officials had to prepare the way for them, and, pending their advent in a positive shape, at least counteract the growth of hitherto predominant British interests and obstruct their consolidation. I shall show later on, in dealing with the Persian Gulf and with Seistan, how zealously they have applied themselves to the task set before them. Not that, in my opinion, we have any right to complain. It is inevitable that Russia, to whom the Customs have been pledged, should make the most of the special interest she is entitled to take in their administration, and should insist even upon their administration being shaped in accordance with her own political aims. Unless she can rely entirely upon the devotion of the Belgians, she may easily be tempted, as the margin of her security diminishes with each additional loan, to insist upon taking the direct control of the Customs into her own hands, even in the absence of any specific default. The Belgians, too, know perfectly well that

without strong external pressure no progressive work can be done in Persia, and that not only is Russia in a position to apply that pressure, but that it suits her to apply it with regard to the Customs. The appointment of a Belgian to the directorship of the Persian Post Office shows that Russia appreciates their co-operation. Why should they, who have no political interests of their own to serve, refuse their services to those who are willing and able to requite them generously?

However valuable to Russia was the control she thus acquired over an important administration, whose staff she can use, to some extent, as her agents in remote provinces of Persia, to which her own influence has few opportunities of direct access, it was only part of a much larger scheme. What she wanted was an absolute control of the fiscal policy of Persia with regard to foreign trade. A negative control she already possessed; for ever since 1828 the trade relations of Persia with foreign countries, except Turkey, have been practically governed by the Treaty of Turkman Chai, which provided for a 5 per cent. *ad valorem* duty on Russian imports. Every Western country, including England, had been content, since then, to stipulate for the insertion in its treaties with Persia of a most-favoured-nation clause, under which it could claim the same commercial treatment that had been granted to Russia. Persia had, it is true, repeatedly applied to the Russian Government to modify the Treaty of Turkman Chai, so as to allow an increase of her Customs duties. But until Russia was in a position to insist upon the revision of the treaty being made in her own exclusive interests she always turned a deaf ear to Persian appeals. The recklessness of the Persian Government in piling up debts on the security of the

Customs gave her creditor the long-looked-for opportunity. It was now Russia's turn to insist upon tariff revision. The interest and sinking fund of the first Russian loan of 1900 already absorbed nearly half the net revenue of the Persian Customs, and when the Shah applied in the following year for a further loan, one of the conditions upon which it was granted was that the Persian tariff should be revised in accordance with the wishes and interests of Russia.

It is very significant that when M. Naus was urging upon the Persian Government the fiscal reforms above alluded to, he recommended them explicitly as a necessary preliminary to the revision of the Russo-Persian Treaty and an increase of the general tariff. The Shah, having entered upon a course of profuse expenditure which could only be met by continuous borrowing, could hardly be expected to resist the exigencies of an otherwise facile creditor. It was easy for Russia to satisfy him that his own interests would be served by tariff revision, since an increase of the tariff would place him in possession of fresh security to borrow upon, and so long as she did not claim any avowedly preferential treatment for Russian products, she could safely be allowed to manipulate the new tariff to her own advantage without technically laying Persia open to remonstrances from other powers. Anyhow, the Shah, being a suppliant for further pecuniary favours, was not in a position to argue with Russia. He could only obey. Russia insisted moreover upon absolute secrecy, lest England should at the last moment make some attempt to parry the blow which threatened her commercial interests. Again the Shah obeyed, and his obedience on this point furnishes perhaps the most striking evidence of how entirely he has ceased to

be a free agent in his relations with Russia. All the conditions of an Oriental court render the maintenance of complete secrecy with regard to affairs of State, however confidential, extraordinarily difficult, and in Teheran, above all, anyone would have been laughed to scorn who contended that important negotiations could be carried through without any leakage of some sort. But on this occasion, at any rate, the Persians were made to feel the necessity of holding their tongue, and they held it, not for a few days or a few weeks, but for months, whilst they continued all the time to lend an ear to our representations on points of tariff, as if the question were still an open one.

The new commercial convention was signed at Teheran by the Persian and Russian plenipotentiaries, one of whom was an official of the Russian Ministry of Finance specially sent out for these negotiations, on November 9th—October 27th, O.S.—1901, and more than a twelvemonth elapsed before the secret was divulged. In the meantime the Shah visited Europe, and came over to London in August, 1902. It was then still believed that the Russo-Persian negotiations had not passed beyond the preliminary stage, and though there was much anxiety amongst those interested in Persian trade, it was not for a moment thought possible that Persia would have definitely committed herself to any measure so detrimental to British commercial interests of a century's standing without communication with the British Government. In the course of a conversation I then had with the Atabeg-Azam, he was indeed good enough to intimate to me that there could be no question of Persia doing such a thing behind England's back. That would, his Highness added, be a departure from

the policy of maintaining as stable an equilibrium as possible between the interests of her two powerful neighbours, which the wisdom of his august master and his own experience of public affairs alike realised to be the only policy Persia could safely pursue. Positive assurances had been given to that effect to the British Government. When the Persian Grand Vizier held this language to me with every appearance of sincerity, more than nine months had elapsed since he had appended his signature to the Russian Convention!

An Oriental potentate is no doubt always reluctant to refuse to his hosts any assurances they may ask for, especially when he anticipates receiving so coveted a distinction as the Order of the Garter has at all times been, and the assurances given during the Shah's stay in England should perhaps never have been taken for more than the usual forms of complimentary rhetoric. M. Naus, the Belgian Director-General of Customs, who had been raised to the rank of Minister of State at Teheran, in recognition of his services during the Russo-Persian negotiations, was just at that time engaged in removing the last possible obstacle to the success of the new arrangements. The Treaty of Erzeroum between Turkey and Persia was the only international engagement which still hampered the latter's freedom of action in the direction desired by Russia. So long as the special régime which governed the trade relations of Turkey and Persia had treaty force, other powers could claim the benefit of it under the most-favoured-nation clause if it was less unfavourable to their interests than the Russo-Persian tariff. M. Naus proceeded to Constantinople for the purpose of coming to an agreement with the Porte, and with the help of some concessions from Persia on other points, and of Russian

suasion, which was probably still more effectual, his mission proved easily successful. By the time the Shah had returned to his capital, everything was in order. On December 27th—December 13th, O.S.—1902, the ratifications of the Russo-Persian Convention of October 27th, 1901, were duly exchanged, and a protocol signed appointing February 14th, 1903, as the date at which the new tariffs were to come into force.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEW COMMERCIAL CONVENTION WITH PERSIA

BY a coincidence, of which the irony was presumably not undesigned, the first public announcement of the conclusion of the new Russo-Persian agreement, which dealt so deliberate a blow at the old-established trade relations of this country with Persia, was made from St. Petersburg on the very day—February 2nd, 1903—on which Lord Downe, at the head of a special mission from King Edward, was investing the Shah in his palace at Teheran with the most illustrious order that a British sovereign can confer upon the head of any friendly and allied state. The publication of the terms of the Russo-Persian agreement was not calculated to remove the apprehensions of those who had repeatedly impressed upon the British Government the gravity of the danger which threatened British commercial interests in Persia. In none of our treaties with Persia during the last century had we taken any special precautions to protect them, beyond the usual provision for the enjoyment by both parties of the treatment accorded by the other to the most-favoured nation. Russia was the only nation that had secured specific terms of treatment, viz. under Article 3 of the Separate Compact relative to Commerce, which was

A SHAH ABBAS BRIDGE OVER THE ZENDEH RUD (p. 131)

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appended to the Treaty of Turkman Chai of February 21st, 1828. Under that article imports and exports were to be subjected to a single duty of 5 per cent. *ad valorem*. This was an eminently moderate rate, and so long as British trade was assured of its permanency there was nothing to complain of. But it never seems to have occurred to anyone that its maintenance depended not upon Persia and ourselves, but upon Persia and Russia, and that there could not therefore be any assurance of its permanency. In 1841, when we at last concluded a commercial treaty with Persia which had been foreshadowed in the preamble to the political treaty of 1814, and in 1857, when the Treaty of Peace was concluded at Paris after the Anglo-Persian war, it would have been easy enough to have procured the insertion of a clause specifying the same tariff rates for Anglo-Persian trade which had been specifically granted to Russia. But this was not done, and so we continued to allow our interests to remain practically dependent upon the maintenance of treaty provisions to which we were no party, and over which we could have no direct control. This would have been an unsound position even if we could have relied upon Persia continuing to be a free agent. But, from the moment when the Persian Government passed under the complete ascendency of Russia and succumbed into financial bondage to her, the position became one of obvious peril, and the end was clearly to be foreseen.

The new Russo-Persian agreement imposes upon Persia a tariff of which the details have been elaborated in the sole interests of Russia. It is, as far as Persia is concerned, merely a revenue tariff, and as such, it is designed to increase just those revenues which she has

mortgaged to Russia, with a view, probably, to facilitate further financial operations of the same ruinous character. It confers scarcely a single advantage on Persian trade, and from a commercial point of view, contains hardly any of those features of reciprocity which characterise commercial conventions between independent and equal powers. As far as Russia is concerned, it materially improves the security of the loans she has already made to Persia, and provides a margin for fresh loans should she deem it expedient to tighten her hold upon the Persian Treasury. It practically discriminates in her favour against the trade of her only serious rival in the Persian markets, viz. British and British-Indian trade, by substituting for a single *ad valorem* duty leviable at the same rate on all imports and exports a complicated system of specific duties, under which the chief imports and exports in which Russia is mainly interested are treated with relative lenience, whilst those which chiefly affect Great Britain and India are severely penalised. It is thus calculated to prove a powerful instrument for promoting the commercial ascendency of Russia in Persia, which M. Witte set himself to establish, and it consecrates her political ascendency by stipulating that it shall never be modified without the consent of the Russian representative at Teheran, and that Russian subjects shall be privileged to pay the duties in Russian bank-notes—a provision of which, besides the material benefit for Russian currency purposes, the moral effect cannot fail to be considerable in an Eastern country where the coin of the realm is an almost sacred symbol of sovereignty, and a peculiar significance will be attached to the right of legal tender in the paper currency of a foreign power.

The technical details of the Russo-Persian tariff it is hardly within the competency of a layman to discuss. But one of the leading British firms in the Persian trade subjected it to a careful analysis immediately after its publication, and embodied some of the results in a letter to the Board of Trade, from which I cannot do better than quote the following extract:—

"Under the most-favoured-nation clause British goods are subject to the provisions of the Treaty of Turkman Chai (1828), fixing the Persian duties, both import and export, at 5 per cent. *ad valorem*. We have endeavoured to estimate the nature of the change which would be introduced by the present tariff. For this purpose we propose to deal in the first place with imports into Persia, and next with exports from Persia. Our calculations are based upon the value of the various articles at the Karun ports:—

TABLE I.—IMPORTS INTO PERSIA

SOME LEADING ARTICLES OF EXPORT TO PERSIA FROM GREAT BRITAIN, CONTINENT (EXCLUDING RUSSIA), AND INDIA.

Description.	Average Value at Port of Entry.	Present Rate of Duty.	Proposed Rate of Duty.	Equivalent of Proposed Rate calculated *ad valorem*.	Increase under present Tariff.
Piece Goods (Cottons of various descriptions) .	£10 per cwt.	5 % *ad valorem*	12 krans per 10 batmans, or 7*s.* 10*d.* per cwt.	9 %	4 %
Sugar—Belgian.	14*s.* 9*d.* per cwt.	5 % *ad valorem*	3 shahis per batman, or 11½*d.* per cwt.	6½ %	1½ %
Sugar—French .	16*s.* per cwt.	5 % *ad valorem*	3 shahis per batman, or 11½*d.* per cwt.	6½ %	1½ %
Tea . .	7*d.* per lb	5 % *ad valorem*	1 toman for 1 batman, or 7*d.* per lb.	100 %	95 %

Table II.—EXPORTS FROM PERSIA

Some Leading Articles of Export from Persia to Great Britain, Continent (excluding Russia), and India.

Description.	Average Value at Port of Exit.	Present Rate of Duty.	Proposed Rate of Duty.	Equivalent of Proposed Rate calculated *ad valorem*.	Increase under present Tariff.
Opium . .	9*s.* per lb.	5 % *ad valorem*	2 tomans a batman, or 1*s.* 2*d.* per lb.	13 %	8 %
Wheat . .	4*s.* 9*d.* per cwt.	5 % *ad valorem*	1 kran for 10 batmans, or 7½*d.* per cwt.	13½ %	8½ %
Barley . .	2*s.* 6*d.* per cwt.	5 % *ad valorem*	1 kran for 10 batmans, or 7½*d.* per cwt.	25 %	20 %
Linseed . .	7*s.* 6*d.* per cwt.	5 % *ad valorem*	1 kran for 10 batmans, or 7½*d.* per cwt.	8½ %	3½ %
Sesame Seed .	6*s.* per cwt.	5 % *ad valorem*	1 kran for 10 batmans, or 7½*d.* per cwt.	10¼ %	5¼ %

"The following facts are deserving of notice in connection with these tables:—

"(I.) Inasmuch as our experience mainly bears upon the Persian Gulf ports, where Russian trade is as yet practically non-existent, we have not dealt with articles of export and import to and from Russia. But it is well known that some of the principal articles of import from Russia are piece goods, bounty-fed sugar, and petroleum. As regards the last, Mr. Maclean estimates that the proposed tariff works out to 1½ per cent. *ad valorem*—a reduction of 3½ per cent. on the present tariff. Russian piece goods will, of course, be taxed equally with British; but it is to be noted that the change from an *ad valorem* to a weight tariff will very greatly advantage Russian goods. Russian piece goods are much more expensive at the port of entry on the north than are the corresponding Manchester goods at the

port of entry on the south. Therefore, a hundredweight of Russian goods pays much more under the present tariff than a hundredweight of corresponding goods made in Manchester. The benefit which we derive from our better methods of production will now be taken away from us. For the proposed tariff is a tariff on the weight. It may be asked how Russian goods of higher price at the port of entry can compete with British goods. The answer is that British goods have to travel further before reaching the principal Persian centres. They are under a disadvantage as regards the transport by land, both in respect of distance and facilities, as, for instance, roads. As regards sugar, it will be seen that the present tariff is not materially changed. But no doubt this is due to the large quantities of sugar which are imported from Russia. It is possible that this sugar is of greater value at the port of entry on the north than is the Continental sugar on the south; for we notice that Mr. Maclean works out the proposed tariff, presumably on Russian sugar, at 2¼ per cent., a reduction of 2¾ per cent. on the existing tariff.

"(II.) As regards the exports, some of the principal articles which we export are wheat, grains of various descriptions, linseed, sesame seed. It is noteworthy that, whereas the duties on these articles have been increased by percentages varying from 3½ to 20 per cent., the corresponding articles of export to Russia on the Caucasian frontier, such as dried fruits, raisins, almonds, &c., are exempted altogether from duty. Rice, which is largely exported to Russia, but not to Great Britain or India, has a reduction of 2 per cent. on the present tariff. Cotton, which is only taken by Russia, is to be exported free. On the other hand, opium, practically all of which is exported to British possessions, will have an increase of 8 per cent. on the present tariff.

"(III.) Certain features of the tariff appear to us to be preposterous, such as the tax of 100 per cent. on tea,

practically all of which comes from India. Also the differentiation of the export duties, to which we have already alluded, according as the products are such as are taken by Russia or by the United Kingdom and India.

"(IV.) But perhaps the principal object of solicitude in the eyes of his Majesty's Government would naturally be the Manchester piece goods trade, because of its large proportions. We estimate that the annual value of piece goods, mainly of British or Indian origin, imported into Persia must be getting on for two million sterling a year. These goods enter Persia from :—

(*a*) Persian Gulf Ports	£1,148,500
(*b*) *Viâ* Trebizond	126,000
(*c*) *Viâ* Baghdad and Kermanshah ...	500,000
	£1,774,500

"We have not included the growing traffic upon the Quetta-Nushki route. All this valuable trade has been built up by an immense amount of individual effort on the part of British merchants as well as of British officials, extending over a period of nearly a century. The substantial increase in the tariff will naturally raise the prices of these piece goods to the consumer, and will consequently restrict the import into Persia to a corresponding extent. Moreover, the advantage conferred by the tariff upon cotton goods of Russian origin, which we have explained above, will tend to penalise the cheap goods of British manufacture as compared to the similar, but more costly, Russian goods, which, impelled by the energy of the Russian Government, are every day penetrating further into Persia and displacing British goods."

The position in which British trade with Persia was placed by the new Russo-Persian tariff was one not only of great difficulty, but of extreme urgency. That tariff was to come into force on February 14th, 1903,

and without any kind of notice British trade was to be subjected to its provisions. British diplomacy at Teheran, deliberately lulled to sleep, had a rude awakening. A convention directly affecting some of our most important interests had been concluded by the Persian Government behind our back, and when the Persian Government at last obtained permission from Russia to communicate it to the British Legation at Teheran the British Government found itself in presence of a *fait accompli* more than a year old. It was far too late to attempt to reverse it, or even to secure a postponement of its effects. What formal grounds of complaint had we got? We had been content to put our faith in most-favoured-nation treatment. That treatment we still had and should continue to have—for what it was worth. We might plead that, apart from all the pledges given and broken by the Persian Government, such a bolt out of the blue was scarcely consonant with customary relations of amity, and that so sudden a disturbance of the conditions upon which our trade with Persia had been based for the best part of a century would be as injurious to Persian interests as our own, seeing that we were still Persia's chief customers. But such arguments could have no effect upon a Government which had ceased to be a free agent, and whatever Persia might have been willing to do, Russia was not going to forego for a single day the benefit of the diplomatic *coup* she had so successfully brought off.

There were only two courses open for the British Government. The one was to enter a protest against the unfriendly character of Persia's action in carrying out such a drastic revision of her tariff without consultation or communication with her chief commercial

client, and to let the new tariff be enforced against us until an opportunity should arise of bringing such pressure to bear upon Persia as would compel her to negotiate a commercial treaty on terms less unfavourable to British trade. The other course was to acquiesce in the *fait accompli* and, lest worse things should befall us, at least tie the Persian Government down to a specific engagement that should prevent any further tampering over our heads with the conditions of our own trade with Persia. The first course might have been more dignified, but in the existing situation at Teheran we might have waited indefinitely for an opportunity of securing more favourable terms from the Persian Government, and, before such an opportunity ever arose, Russia might, on the other hand, have discovered in the light of experience that the new tariff still left room for improvement from her point of view, and compelled the Persians to revise it once more for her benefit. In that case, with still nothing but our most-favoured-nation clause to lean on, we should have been as helpless as ever to resist a fresh turn of the Russian thumb-screw. The second course, at least, locked the stable door; and though the best horse had already been stolen, we could make sure of keeping, at any rate, the nag, though a sorry one, which took its place. This appears to have been the view which commended itself to the British Government, and, in the circumstances, no doubt on the whole rightly, if one may judge from the annoyance manifested by the Russians. A convention was rushed through at Teheran, and signed on February 9th, 1903, four days before the Russo-Persian tariff came into effect.

Though it made the best of a bad bargain, it must

have been very galling for Sir Arthur Hardinge to have to affix his signature to so unsatisfactory a document. On the face of it, it merely gives a British *imprimatur* to the far-reaching changes in the commercial régime of Persia, which Russia had extorted from the Shah's Government for the benefit of Russian interests in the struggle between this country and Russia for the Persian markets. The Persian import tariff, sanctioned by Article I. of the British Convention, is identically the same as that appended to the Russian Convention. Even in theory, we who give Persia the benefit of our open markets all over the world for her exports, get at best the same treatment for our imports into Persia which she gives to ultra-protectionist Russia. In fact, she gives us much worse treatment, for her tariffs have been carefully framed for her under Russian dictation for the benefit of Russian trade and for the detriment of ours, the goods she takes from us being much more heavily taxed than those she takes from the Russians. The Persian export tariff, drawn up in the same spirit, presses heavily upon such Persian products as are chiefly exported to British markets, whilst those which are in demand in Russia are treated with conspicuous indulgence.

Article II. contains a very singular provision. It confers upon Persia the right to raise her duties upon British imports in the event of any change in British fiscal policy which would lead to duties being imposed on certain Persian goods higher than those enumerated in a tabular statement of Russian duties on merchandise of Persian origin, *i.e.* that, though in return for the benefit of our existing free-trade system Persia concedes to us nothing to-day which she does not concede to Russia, she reserves the right of penalising our trade

if we change our system. Nor is this all. As the Convention stands, she reserves equally the right of penalising any British colony with an independent fiscal system that should cease to accord to Persia the most-favoured-nation treatment—an extraordinary provision for the British Minister to have ever accepted, especially in view of the fact that British trade with Persia is largely Anglo-Indian trade. Fortunately this provision has been practically rescinded, under pressure from the Imperial Government, since the Convention was signed.

Article III., by explicitly admitting without any limitation or control the right to prohibit the exportation of cereals on the plea of securing the food of the people, is only too well calculated to perpetuate one of the Persian administrative abuses most detrimental to trade. There are few greater adepts in the lucrative art of engineering a "corner" in grain than Persian officials.

The abolition of the local tolls levied on caravan routes which is conceded by Article IV., is a largely illusory provision, for the old caravan routes are being gradually superseded by roads built with European capital, upon which special tolls are leviable under the concessions granted for their construction. Moreover, it is the tolls levied on the Resht-Teheran road, controlled by the Russians, which are adopted as the standard of tolls to be levied on other roads.

The value of the detailed regulations respecting custom-house procedure to be drawn up according to Article V. in agreement with the British Legation will be determined by the spirit in which they are applied. What that spirit is likely to be may be estimated from what I have already had occasion to say about the

Belgian administration of Persian Customs. As a Belgian official remarked in an audible aside to a colleague, which I was presumably not intended to overhear or expected to understand: "Mais nous sommes, donc, ici pour embêter les Anglais."

Instead of simply laying down a normal rate of exchange between Persian and British currency for purposes of custom-house payments, such as is laid down in the Russo-Persian Convention between Persian and Russian currency, Article VI. of the British Convention enacts a circuitous *modus operandi*, by which the Persian krans are first to be converted at a given rate into French francs—a coin absolutely unknown in Persia—and then the equivalent of the latter worked out in British currency. It is not surprising that this roundabout method has already given rise to complaints from British traders.

The last article of the Convention, though purely formal, is by no means the least significant. All previous treaties between this country and Persia have been drawn up in English and Persian. This Convention is drawn up in French and Persian, and Article VI. provides that, in case of discrepancies, the French text is to be deemed authoritative. Both from internal evidence and from a comparison of dates it is clear that the British Convention was very hastily drawn up, and is little more than a copy of the Russian Convention. It is easy also to surmise the reasons for this procedure, but it none the less shows only too plainly the shifts to which British diplomacy was reduced. It is quite pathetic to note how in one of the notes addressed by Sir Arthur Hardinge to M. Naus, which have been published with the Convention, the British Minister assures the Persian negotiator in

almost apologetic terms that, though the new tariffs will not be promulgated in England until some weeks after they have come into force, the delay will be of no practical consequence to Persia, as they do not affect the treatment actually applied to Persian trade in the British Empire. As to the serious consequences to British trade of the enforcement of the enhanced tariffs in Persia without any adequate notice of impending change to those immediately concerned, the British Minister has not a word to say.

I have dwelt at some length on the significant peculiarities of this Convention, because even those who pooh-pooh our political interests in Persia can hardly view with satisfaction a situation which reacts so unfavourably upon our commercial interests. The value of our Persian trade, and especially of the direct trade between the United Kingdom and Persia, is no doubt small when compared with the total volume of our foreign trade. But the importance of the question cannot be estimated solely in £ *s. d.*, and it is certainly not diminished by the fact that our Persian trade is largely an Anglo-Indian trade, and therefore directly affects the interests of our great Indian dependency. It is worth noting, as an illustration of our methods, that, whereas Russia sent out an expert from the Ministry of Finance to take part in the commercial negotiations at Teheran, the British Board of Trade waited until our Convention, such as it is, was concluded before sending out an official to report upon it, mainly, it may be presumed, with the object of showing that it is not so injurious to our trade as it might have been.

PERSIAN BEGGARS

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CHAPTER IX

THE IMPOVERISHMENT OF PERSIA

IT is difficult for the European to pass judgment upon an Oriental system of government, or rather it is all too easy. We apply to it our own standards, and immediately rush to the conclusion, not only that the system is in itself abominably bad, but that it must be as intolerable to those who live under it as it would be to ourselves, and that, therefore, it cannot possibly endure. But our standards are not those of the East. What is intolerable to us is not merely tolerated by the Oriental, but is invested in his eyes with the one sanction which he reveres, namely, that of long-descended custom; and the very notion of change is almost more abhorrent to his conservative mind than any of the evils at the mere thought of which the Western mind revolts. Judged by Western standards, the Persian system of government, which, now that the Khanates of Central Asia have passed out of existence, represents—in a less modified form than Turkey, or even, perhaps, than Afghanistan—the last surviving type of the mediæval Asiatic monarchies founded by the Moslem sword, stands irrevocably condemned.

It is in theory an absolute despotism, and though, like every other despotism, it is subjected in practice to certain restraints, they do little to mitigate in Persia the

real evils of arbitrary and irresponsible power. The authority which the Shah delegates to his ministers and to the great provincial governors, and that which they in turn delegate to their subordinates through all the ramifications of the administrative hierarchy, is wielded in the same despotic spirit, and the restraints imposed upon it are equally ineffectual to protect the public weal. Persia is governed by a huge bureaucracy, in which, to adopt one of Lord Curzon's severe generalisations, cupidity open, shameless, and universal, seems to have been raised into the guiding principle of human conduct. Offices of every kind are bought and sold for a consideration which is in most cases solely, and in all cases, at least in part, pecuniary ; and the buyer and seller are equally well aware that the price paid will be wrung out of those below in the descending scale of the hierarchy until the burden of all this shameless trafficking falls at last upon the patient shoulders of the toiling masses. As fixity of tenure is the one boon which never attaches to the purchase of any post, the chief anxiety of a new occupant, after recouping himself for the original outlay, is to provide the means of securing its renewal whenever the customary indications show his position to be threatened, either by disfavour from above or by growing competition from below. It is obvious that under such a system, and in view of the inextricable confusion of the judicial and executive functions of government, there can be no question of justice in the sense in which we understand the word. Whether administered by the ecclesiastical tribunals on the basis of the Shari, or sacred law, or by the civil tribunals on the basis of the Urf, or common law, justice means at best a reasonable compromise for which both parties pay freely, and at worst the triumph

of the longest purse, or of the strongest arm, over the most elementary principles of equity.

Where the one object of every individual connected —in however high or however humble a capacity—with the government of the country is to enrich himself in the first place, and in the second place to enrich those above him who hold his own opportunities of wealth in the hollow of their hand, every penny spent upon other objects than these is naturally regarded as so much diverted from the proper objects of expenditure. Hence in no other Eastern country that I have ever known—except perhaps Korea—is so little money spent upon the public services or upon works of public utility, or is such money as is spent upon them so utterly misspent. According to the accepted estimates of state expenditure, the Teheran Treasury disburses about 50,000,000 krans, or rather less than £1,000,000, per annum. Amongst the various items of expenditure no mention is even made of anything in the shape of public works, though probably out of the modest sum of 2,600,000 krans (not quite £50,000) assigned to local government, some pittance is devoted to them. On the other hand, 18,000,000 krans, or nearly two-fifths of the total expenditure, are squandered upon the maintenance of an army than which it is impossible to conceive a force more worthless for fighting purposes; 10,000,000 krans are absorbed by a pension list, which merely represents an organised system of permanent bribery; and 8,500,000 krans are assigned to the Shah's Court, to the royal princes, and to the clansmen of the Kajar tribe, from which the present dynasty has sprung.

Yet, when all has been said that can be said in condemnation of the Persian system of government, the fact remains that it is somehow a working system, and

has worked in much the same shape as we see at present for centuries past, surviving all the changes of dynasty and vicissitudes of fortune that Persia has endured in the course of her chequered history. With a few modifications of costume the bas-reliefs of Persepolis might serve to illustrate just as well the manners and customs of official Persia under Muzaffer-ed-Din Shah as under Xerxes and Darius. Attempts are sometimes made to palliate the more glaring faults of the existing system by explaining away the sale and purchase of offices as a clumsy method of securing the payment of revenue, and the elaborate machinery of *mudakhil*, or official perquisites, as a speculative substitute for the regular salaries attaching to office in more civilised countries. These attempts appear to me to be laboured and needless. The true explanation of the survival of such an apparently ruinous system of government ought, I think, to be sought in its rudimentary simplicity, and in the scope it gives to the individual ability of a strong ruler. Time after time Persia has been on the point of sinking in the mire of corruption, which such a system in weak and incompetent hands is bound to produce, and the country, driven to desperation, has fallen into a state of chaotic anarchy, the ultimate expression of popular discontent. Then a strong man like Shah Abbas, or Nadir Shah, or Agha Muhammed, the founder of the reigning dynasty, has arisen, and by sheer force of character and rough-and-ready methods has set the primitive machinery of government once more in motion. On a smaller scale the same process takes place from time to time in the different provinces of the kingdom. Under a feeble or more than usually grasping Governor the province lapses into a state of chronic turbulence. That is the one administrative sin

for which it is hard to purchase forgiveness. A strong Governor is sent down to put things straight, and, whatever may be thought of the methods he employs, the desired result is achieved to the satisfaction not only of the monarch whom he represents, but of the people whom he is set over. For the highest praise which the Persians can bestow upon the man in authority over them is not that he is a just man, or a kindly man, or even a generous man, but that he is a strong man—so instinctively do they realise that it is only a strong man who can work such an unwieldy system of government without abnormal friction. As for the merits or demerits of the system, it is the one to which they have been accustomed for centuries, and the vast majority know and can conceive of none other.

On its own merits, though it may not fulfil a single one of the functions which we usually associate with the idea of government, there would be no more reason to assign a term to the Persian system of government to-day than at any other critical period in the history of the country, were there any prospect that Persia would be allowed to work out her own destinies free from outside interference. In no Eastern land—not even in China—have the moral and intellectual forces of the West penetrated so little amongst the people as in Persia, or, to judge by the few Persians of the higher classes who have been educated or have travelled abroad, exercised so little permanent influence upon those actually brought into contact with them. In spite of a common Aryan origin to which the Persian language still bears witness, the infusion of other Asiatic strains of blood, and still more, the ascendency of Islam, have fixed a profound gulf between the Persian and the European

mind. Violent changes may take place again, as they have taken place in the past, from purely internal causes, in the *personnel* of government, but it is difficult to imagine from what quarter within Persia itself could proceed the initiative of any change that should radically affect the system of government, unless perhaps it were the result of some great religious movement such as Babiism was, and still is by some, believed to portend.

But an Oriental system of government, which may be proof against the moral and intellectual impact of the West, and, if left to itself, might continue to command submission, and even approval, at the hands of a totally ignorant people trained to fatalistic resignation, is exposed to entirely new perils when it is suddenly brought face to face with the material forces of the West. None of those material forces has proved more subversive of the old order of things in Oriental states than the facilities which our modern system of credit has opened up for the facile acquisition of wealth by their rulers. Contact, even of the most superficial kind, with the Western world stimulates them to new conceptions of luxury, new forms of extravagance which cannot be gratified out of the resources hitherto at their command, and the Western world is generally ready enough to furnish them with the means of gratifying these new tastes—on its own terms, *bien entendu* —whether in the shape of a financial operation on purely business lines, or in that of a politico-financial transaction such as the last few years especially have brought into fashion. Persia has been the last Oriental state to avail itself of these dangerous facilities, but the recklessness with which it is making up for lost time is a feature of which the gravity can hardly be overrated

in connection not only with its foreign relations, but also with the internal condition of the country. In proportion to her existing resources Persia is piling up a debt which in the course of a few years must, at the present rate, prove wholly unmanageable.

All statistics with regard to Persia have to be accepted with great caution, as there are no authoritative data upon which they can be based. None appear to be, on the whole, more trustworthy than those compiled for the Supplement to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* by a European official, whose long record of able and loyal service under the Persian Government affords an honourable contrast to the records of most Europeans who have from time to time drifted into Persian employ, and perhaps for that very reason have received but scant recognition. Imperfect as they necessarily are, these statistics tell their own tale even to those who, not having seen Persia, can hardly be expected to realise their full meaning. Persia is at present an essentially poor country. It extends, roughly, about 700 miles north and south, and 900 miles west and east, over an area of 628,000 square miles. But the greater part of this area is very sparsely populated. A liberal estimate puts the population in 1881 at about 7,650,000 souls, of whom 2,000,000 in the towns, 3,800,000 in the villages, and the rest nomads. But it is doubtful whether the population much exceeds 6,500,000. and this would give an average of barely more than ten inhabitants per square mile. With the exception of Teheran, there is scarcely a city that does not show unmistakable signs of shrinkage, and one of the most melancholy features all over Persia is the number of deserted villages. No doubt the potential resources of the country are considerable, and under an intelligent

administration capable of very great development; but as things are at present Persia is growing, and is bound to grow, poorer every year. Estimated in krans, the base silver currency of the country, the revenue which reaches the Treasury has to some extent increased. In 1876 it amounted to 58,000,000 krans, in 1890 to 60,000,000, and to-day it amounts possibly to 70,000,000 or 75,000,000. But even this increase is due mainly to the new system of administering the Customs. The direct revenue produced by the *maliat*, a sort of combined land and industrial income tax which affords the best test of national prosperity, has remained almost stationary. In reality, however, the conditions are very much worse, and the nominal increase is converted into a very considerable decrease as soon as we take into account the heavy fall in the value of the white metal and the consequent depreciation of the Persian currency. The usual rate of exchange when I was in Persia in 1884 was about 29 krans to the pound; to-day it is 56. At this rate the revenue, which represented £2,000,000 in 1876, to-day only represents about £1,500,000. Unless placed under foreign supervision, as has been the case with the Customs, it cannot possibly, under the prevailing system, expand; and so long as it is applied only to such futile, if not mischievous, purposes as the maintenance of a worthless army, the payment of a huge pension list which serves as a pretext for untold jobbery, and the expenses of a prodigal court, its expansion would be a very doubtful benefit.

On the other hand, there has been of recent years a notable appreciation in the cost, not only of such imported goods as tea, sugar, cotton tissues, etc., which must be regarded as necessaries of life in Persia, but

also in that of foodstuffs and other staple commodities produced in the country. For imported goods the new tariff will still further increase this appreciation. The Persians, for instance, are a nation of tea-drinkers, but tea is not grown in Persia. Hitherto, under the old 5 per cent. *ad valorem* tariff, the duty on imported tea was trifling. The specific duties under the new tariff work out to 170 per cent. *ad valorem* on the finer, and 114 per cent. on the inferior, qualities, *i.e.* that the cost of one of the commodities of almost universal consumption has been more than doubled. One would imagine that, at any rate, from the appreciation of foodstuffs grown in the country the people in general would have derived some benefit. But it does not appear to be so. Prices have to a great extent been manipulated for the exclusive benefit of powerful officials and large landowners. Only a few years ago the Governor of Teheran and a ring of high-placed officials at Court engineered a "corner" which drove bread up to famine prices until it affected the food supplies of the Cossack brigade, whereupon General Kosagowsky took the law practically into his own hands, and swept away the barriers which had been erected all round Teheran to prevent the ingress of foodstuffs to the markets of the capital. This was, however, only a more than usually glaring instance of official greed. Hardly a year passes in which there is not a famine in some province of Persia. There may be the most abundant crops in other provinces, but owing to the absence of any proper means of communication, they cannot be transported, except at a prohibitive cost, into the famine-stricken region. Nevertheless, the governors of the more favoured provinces, who would not lift a finger to relieve the famine if they could, make its existence an excuse for laying an

embargo on the exportation of grain from their own district, in order to buy it up at reduced prices for their own account with a view to future speculation. The burden of all these sins of omission and commission falls heavily upon the common people, for whom the cost of living, at Teheran at any rate, is stated to have doubled during the last twenty years. During the same period the balance of trade has increased steadily against Persia, and, according to the returns shown by the new Belgian Administration of Customs for 1901–2, the imports amounted to just about £5,000,000, while the exports fell short of £3,000,000. These figures may not be altogether trustworthy, and in some respects they are even obviously misleading, as they take no account of the irregular trade along the land frontiers and in the Gulf which escapes the Customs, or of the constant and mysterious flow of Persian silver across the north-eastern frontiers into Central Asia and Afghanistan. But they also do not take into account the importation of silver bullion for the mint. As a mere approximate estimate these figures probably suffice to show roughly how far the value of Persian exports falls short of that of Persian imports. Yet Persia has to meet the deficiency somehow, and in her case, at any rate, there can be no question of "invisible exports" in the shape of foreign investments, profit on freights, etc., to redress the balance. On the contrary, she has become during the last few years a debtor state with relatively very heavy liabilities. There is, therefore, only too much reason to believe that she has met increasing deficits, at first by the simple process of drawing upon the savings accumulated during the earlier part of the last reign, which was a period of peace and relative prosperity, and of late by the still more simple process

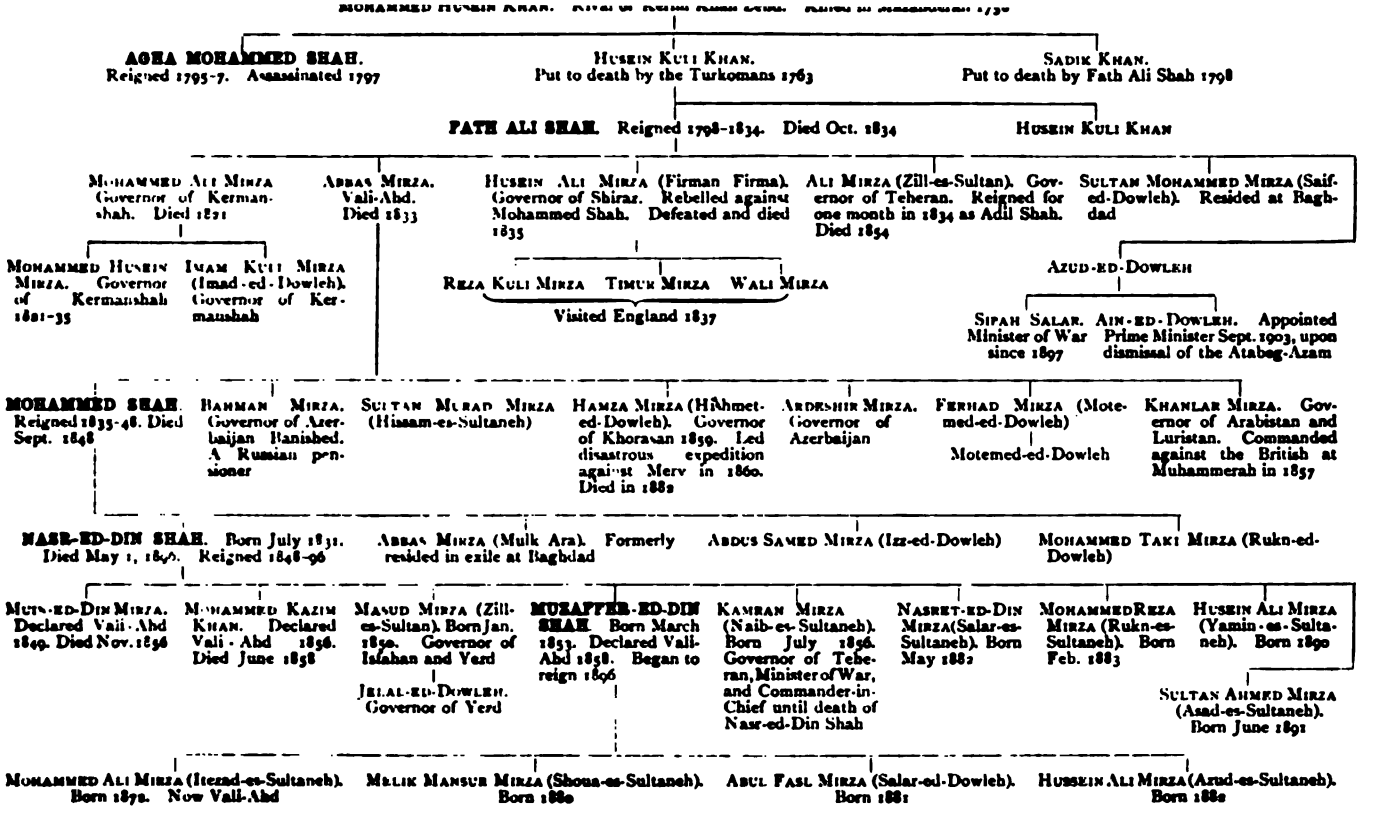
of borrowing with both hands. It is impossible that, in a country governed like Persia, the impoverishment of the people should not go hand-in-hand with the impoverishment of the Court and the bureaucracy, for whose benefit the people exist; and, though high-placed individuals may have waxed fat, there can be no doubt that the State as a whole—Court, bureaucracy, and people—is being rapidly reduced to penury.

CHAPTER X

POPULAR DISCONTENT IN PERSIA

THE extent to which the process of national impoverishment I have just described has affected the people of Persia can only be surmised indirectly from incidental manifestations of distress, but the desperate shifts to which the Court has been reduced in order to gratify its growing extravagance, bear abundant evidence to the penury of the State as a whole. The story is a simple one. It is, in fact, nothing but the old story of the rake's progress.

The late Shah Nasr-ed-Din had not only many of the qualities which go to make a strong monarch, but he practised steadfastly for many years the saving virtue of economy. He came to the throne in 1848, at the age of seventeen, and, judged by Persian standards, he showed himself, as he matured in years, a wise and firm ruler, and secured something like order and tranquillity throughout his dominions. Favoured by the economic conditions of trade which prevailed at the time in the outside world, the people of Persia enjoyed a fair measure of prosperity. Of that prosperity Nasr-ed-Din naturally took ample tithes for himself, and, being of a frugal disposition, he increased and hoarded his wealth after the fashion of Oriental sovereigns. Large amounts of specie, costly jewels, and uncut


MOHAMMED HUSEIN KHAN.
AGHA MOHAMMED SHAH. Reigned 1795-7. Assassinated 1797
HUSEIN KULI KHAN. Put to death by the Turkomans 1763
SADIK KHAN. Put to death by Fath Ali Shah 1798
FATH ALI SHAH. Reigned 1798-1834. Died Oct. 1834
HUSEIN KULI KHAN
MOHAMMED ALI MIRZA Governor of Kermanshah. Died 1821
ABBAS MIRZA. Vali-Abd. Died 1833
HUSEIN ALI MIRZA (Firman Firma). Governor of Shiraz. Rebelled against Mohammed Shah. Defeated and died 1835
ALI MIRZA (Zill-es-Sultan). Governor of Teheran. Reigned for one month in 1834 as Adil Shah. Died 1854
SULTAN MOHAMMED MIRZA (Saif-ed-Dowleh). Resided at Baghdad
MOHAMMED HUSEIN MIRZA. Governor of Kermanshah 1821-35
IMAM KULI MIRZA (Imad-ed-Dowleh). Governor of Kermanshah
REZA KULI MIRZA TIMUR MIRZA WALI MIRZA
Visited England 1837
AZUD-ED-DOWLEH
SIPAH SALAR. Minister of War since 1897
AIN-ED-DOWLEH. Appointed Prime Minister Sept. 1903, upon dismissal of the Atabeg-Azam
MOHAMMED SHAH. Reigned 1835-48. Died Sept. 1848
BAHMAN MIRZA. Governor of Azerbaijan Banished. A Russian pensioner
SULTAN MURAD MIRZA (Hissam-es-Sultaneh)
HAMZA MIRZA (Hishmet-ed-Dowleh). Governor of Khorasan 1859. Led disastrous expedition against Merv in 1860. Died in 1882
ARDESHIR MIRZA. Governor of Azerbaijan
FERHAD MIRZA (Motemed-ed-Dowleh)
Motemed-ed-Dowleh
KHANLAR MIRZA. Governor of Arabistan and Luristan. Commanded against the British at Muhammerah in 1857
NASR-ED-DIN SHAH. Born July 1831. Died May 1, 1896. Reigned 1848-96
ABBAS MIRZA (Mulk Ara). Formerly resided in exile at Baghdad
ABDUS SAMED MIRZA (Izz-ed-Dowleh)
MOHAMMED TAKI MIRZA (Rukn-ed-Dowleh)
MUTS-ED-DIN MIRZA. Declared Vali-Abd 1849. Died Nov. 1856
MOHAMMED KAZIM KHAN. Declared Vali-Abd 1856. Died June 1858
MASUD MIRZA (Zill-es-Sultan). Born Jan. 1850. Governor of Isfahan and Yezd
JELAL-ED-DOWLEH. Governor of Yezd
MUZAFFER-ED-DIN SHAH. Born March 1853. Declared Vali-Abd 1858. Began to reign 1896
KAMRAN MIRZA (Naib-es-Sultaneh). Born July 1856. Governor of Teheran, Minister of War, and Commander-in-Chief until death of Nasr-ed-Din Shah
NASRET-ED-DIN MIRZA (Salar-es-Sultaneh). Born May 1882
MOHAMMED REZA MIRZA (Rukn-es-Sultaneh). Born Feb. 1883
HUSEIN ALI MIRZA (Yamin-es-Sultaneh). Born 1890
SULTAN AHMED MIRZA (Asad-es-Sultaneh). Born June 1891
MOHAMMED ALI MIRZA (Itezad-es-Sultaneh). Born 1872. Now Vali-Abd
MELIK MANSUR MIRZA (Shoua-es-Sultaneh). Born 1880
ABUL FASL MIRZA (Salar-ed-Dowleh). Born 1881
HUSSEIN ALI MIRZA (Azud-es-Sultaneh). Born 1882

[redacted]

[1] This pedigree, brought up to date from that published in Lord Curzon's *Persia*, only mentions the more important male members of the Royal Family in each

stones, gold plate and matchless *objets de vertu* were accumulated in the vaults of the palace. The value of Nasr-ed-Din's treasure was at one time estimated by sober authorities at £4,000,000, and that was probably no excessive estimate. During the last ten years of his reign, however, his old habits of economy seem to have deserted him, and as, owing to the fall in the price of silver and other untoward circumstances, the prosperity of the country began at the same time to wane, not only did he cease to add to his reserves, but he began to draw upon them with unaccustomed prodigality. Thus it came to pass that, when his life was brought to an untimely end, in 1896, his son, Muzaffer-ed-Din, found his inheritance had fallen very far short of his anticipations. The succession to the throne always involves heavy expenditure. Muzaffer-ed-Din, who had held, as Vali-Ahd, his own miniature court at Tabriz, and surrounded himself with his own followers, chiefly drawn from the province of Azerbaijan, had not only to reward on the usual scale the services rendered to him whilst he was Heir-Apparent, but also had to propitiate his father's *entourage*, whose powerful influence was indispensable to a peaceful transfer of the supreme authority. By the time his Majesty had transferred his Court from Tabriz to Teheran and seated himself securely on the throne, the remnants of Nasr-ed-Din's wealth were nearly dissipated. According to all accounts, Muzaffer-ed-Din Shah is a man of a kindly and easy-going disposition, full of amiable intentions, and by no means wanting in ability, indulgent to others if also addicted to gross self-indulgence. But he is weak and timorous, except in the matter of expenditure, where he is lavish to a degree, and absolutely undiscriminating in the objects of his munificence. Money

flows like water through his fingers, and after wai
so many years for his inheritance, he was determine
deal with it, now that he had at last entered upon it
the scale not of its meagre reality, but of the abunda
he had fondly ascribed to it in his day dreams at Tal
The last of the ancient gold ingots bearing the cip
of Fath Ali Shah and, I believe, most of the jewels
other treasures which did not constitute an indispens
part of the regalia for exhibition on state occasi
were disposed of through discreet channels in
European markets, and principally in Russia. Tl
for a time, retrenchment, taking the usual forn
deferred payments, in regard to all expenditure wl
did not immediately affect the Court, and the enhar
offerings of loyal officials anxious to ingratiate th
selves with the new sovereign, staved off the da
reckoning. But at last the moment came when t
precarious devices could no longer be practised witl
danger of serious discontent at home. There is a l
to the patience of even Persian soldiers in the matte
deferred payments, and a Persian sovereign fresl
the throne cannot afford to suspend indefinitely
gentle flow of largess which is required to irrigate
parched soil of official loyalty.

It was then that for the first time the credit of
country was pledged abroad to meet the requirem
of the Court, and pledged not on business line
private capitalists, but to a foreign Power wl
political ambitions already cast their shadow
Persia. About four millions sterling nominally l
flowed into the Persian Treasury in little more t
three years, through the channel of the Ban
d'Escompte acting as the agent of the Rus
Ministry of Finance, and, after allowance for

necessary deductions, the sums placed at the unfettered disposal of the Shah as the proceeds of the Russian loans must have amounted to at least two millions net. Russia knows how to ingratiate herself with Eastern potentates, and whilst we should have used our influence at Teheran, had we become creditors of Persia, to press for reforms and to exercise some sort of control over the expenditure to which such large sums were devoted, she has shown a discreet indifference as to the purposes to which they were applied, and kept her eye solely on the security which guarantees her investment, and on the political advantages she can reap from it. The result is that not only has every penny of these two millions been spent without the slightest tangible benefit to the country, but the unrestrained facility with which the money has been borrowed and spent has confirmed the Shah in his natural propensity to wasteful extravagance. To our ears two or three millions sterling may not sound a very formidable sum, but in Persia it means that the State is now spending, for the sole benefit of the Court, at the rate of nearly twice its normal revenue, and this when, in the usual course of things, an enormous proportion of the normal revenue already goes to the support of the Court.

What the Shah has actually spent all this money on it is difficult to say, and perhaps best not to inquire. English ears may be less prudish than they used to be, but the vices of Oriental courts are not yet a fit subject for public discussion, least of all those which prevail, according to the *chronique scandaleuse* of Teheran, at the Court of Muzaffer-ed-Din Shah. Unworthy as many of the objects of the Shah's domestic munificence are, it would have been well for his popularity had he at least spent the money in his own country. What his

people most bitterly resent are the large sums he exper
out of the country in the course of his European trave
Popular imagination is no doubt prone to exaggera
but the cost of his Majesty's two journeys to Eur
since his accession must, I am assured, be reckoned
hundreds of thousands of pounds, and the Persia
not unnaturally look with disfavour upon the growth
such unfamiliar and costly tastes. It is not so ma
years ago that a Teheran newspaper—for there are t
or three newspapers printed in Persia, of a stric
semi-official character — boasted that whatever mig
be the shortcomings of Persia, she had no natio
debt, and none of the resources of the country w
pledged, none of its revenues mortgaged to forei
creditors. What has become of that proud boast
day? Is it surprising that the Persians should lo
askance at the importation of financial methods whi
graft on to the old abuses, to which long familiar
has reconciled them, a fresh growth of abuses cloth
in a novel and foreign garb? The story of these n
loans, about which no official information has ever be
vouchsafed, loses nothing in the telling as it circula
through the bazaars of the capital and filters do
from caravanserai to caravanserai into the remot
provinces, and the people ask themselves what is t
meaning of these mysterious operations by which t
revenues of the country are being signed away, whi
for the millions of krans they are supposed to produ
not a road or a bridge has been built, not a carava
serai has been repaired, not a canal has been dug
bring water to the vast tracts of fertile land which t
want of irrigation alone condemns to remain wastes
arid desert. There are in many quarters signs of gra
popular discontent, not the least significant amo

them being a great revival of Babiism; and what makes these manifestations of disaffection the more ominous is that the disaffection arises out of entirely novel developments in the misgovernment of the country, for a remedy to which its past history affords no precedent.

When I was at Teheran a year ago, popular resentment appeared to be directed not so much against the Shah, who, not being reputed a strong man, enjoys but little of his father's prestige, as against his powerful Prime Minister, the Atabeg-Azam. That the latter, however unscrupulous he may be, is in many respects the ablest man in the country is readily conceded, even by those who have the least liking for him. He then possessed, as far as it was possible to judge, the full and undivided confidence of his master, and what was perhaps even more important, the generous support of Russia, whose liberality to those who serve her is unstinted. His bright and genial manner, his ready wit, and his intellectual powers cannot but make a favourable impression upon all those who approach him, and amongst foreigners generally, whatever they might think of his policy, it was admitted that it would be difficult, even if it were desirable, to replace him. Yet, on the other hand, it was he who was, with good reason, held largely responsible for the reckless course of extravagance upon which the Shah has embarked, and for the heavy indebtedness into which an impoverished country is being dragged. His position, great as it still was, was, as that of every favourite Minister must always be, one of constant difficulty. The first duty of a Persian Grand Vizier is to minister to the financial necessities of his master, and on this point, though the present Shah may not

be a strong man, he is clearly not less exacting than any of his predecessors. Another and scarcely less important duty of the Grand Vizier is to maintain order throughout the Shah's dominions. In this respect the Atabeg-Azam has not been, for some time past, altogether fortunate. In addition to the chronic turbulence of the less settled parts of the country, such as Luristan, there have been serious disturbances this year in most of the large cities, partly due to the discontent caused by the new Customs tariff and the consequent depression of trade, and partly to more general causes of disaffection. These disturbances were repressed for the time being by the usual methods, but the moment was bound to come when it would be hard for the Atabeg-Azam to fulfil both his duties with equal success, and he had already once before learnt from bitter experience that in Teheran the Tarpeian rock is very near to the Capitol. Powerful as he has been during his second tenure of office, his power was probably never quite so assured as it seemed to be when he was suddenly hurled from office in 1897, and his life was believed to be in such imminent jeopardy that the British Minister deemed it expedient to take measures for protecting him during his journey to his place of exile at Kum, by allowing the physician of the Legation to accompany him—a service which he requited on his return to power by working tooth and nail, and ultimately with success, to procure Sir Mortimer Durand's transfer to another post. That the Atabeg was recalled to office within eighteen months, and loaded afterwards with still higher honours, afforded no permanent guarantee that history might not repeat itself in his case.

Apart from the support which he derived from Russian

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influence, and which was, of course, conditional upon his subserviency to Russian policy, the Atabeg's strength lay mainly in the absence of any serious competitor. His chief rival was supposed to be the Amin-ed-Dowleh, who succeeded the Atabeg after the latter's fall in 1897. Great hopes were founded upon his accession to office, as he had had considerable experience of state affairs, and was believed to be a man of enlightened views and honesty of purpose, as well as of undoubted intelligence. He did, indeed, prepare a fairly practical scheme of administrative reform. He proposed to draw up a regular budget, which should set forth the actual revenue and expenditure of the country, and he laid great stress upon the necessity of separate administration for the collection and for the expenditure of revenue. A revision of the assessment of the land tax, perhaps the most crying need of the country, was one of the main features of his programme, which included a reduction of the standing army to 20,000 effectives, and the organisation of the irregular cavalry into a disciplined body of *gendarmerie*. But excellent as were his intentions, he had not the force of purpose to carry them through, and his programme, like many other similar programmes in Persia, was practically pigeonholed, even before he, in turn, fell as suddenly from power, in the spring of 1898, as had the Atabeg, who was once more to succeed him. Some of the Amin-ed-Dowleh's ideas have, however, been carried out through other agencies, such as the reform of the smaller currency by the introduction of nickel coinage; and a few of the schools which he opened by appealing to private enterprise, himself setting the example of liberal subscriptions and donations, still subsist. The Amin-ed-Dowleh was sent to live in compulsory retirement on

his own property near Resht. Another and perhaps the most formidable of the Atabeg's rivals was believed to be the Firman-Firma, now in exile at Baghdad. He is a great-grandson of Fath Ali Shah, and brother of the chief wife, and at the same time son-in-law, of the present Shah. He has filled in turn many high offices, and is credited with the principal share in the Atabeg's downfall in 1897. Others whom the Atabeg deemed it prudent to have removed from the vicinity of the Court were the Kawam-ed-Dowleh, banished to Meshed, for many years member of the Council of State, and connected by marriage with the Shah; the Nassir-el-Mulk, in honourable exile as Governor of Kurdistan, who was a fellow-student at Balliol both of Lord Curzon and of the present British Minister at Teheran, Sir Arthur Hardinge, and was sent on a special mission to London to announce the accession of Muzaffer-ed-Din; and the Ala-el-Mulk, now Governor of Kerman, a *Seyyid* or descendant of the Prophet, who comes of an influential family, and has occupied important diplomatic posts at St. Petersburg and Constantinople. The last-named especially has the reputation of being a strong man, with independent and progressive views. Other enemies the Atabeg still had nearer to Court, and though he again lately procured the removal of a good many "suspects," amongst others of the Hakim-el-Mulk, the most masterful Minister could never hope to eliminate all his would-be rivals.

But though, like most Oriental courts, that of Teheran is a hot-bed of ceaseless intrigue, the Atabeg had perhaps less to fear in that direction than from the growth of popular discontent outside. Public opinion, in the sense in which we understand it, can hardly be said to

exist in Persia, but there is an influential class whose voice, though no longer so powerful as in the past, may still sway the masses at a critical moment. In no Mussulman country is scepticism so prevalent and even fashionable as in Persia, but the religious teachers of the Faith have not yet entirely lost their hold upon the people, and in a Shia country the ecclesiastical authority is not so closely bound up with the secular authority as in Sunni countries. The moral standard of the Persian *Mullahs* may not be of the highest, and they are indeed by no means free from the prevailing vices of the official classes; but in the absence of any independent aristocracy of birth, or of any influential middle class, it is they alone who can in some measure stand, and have at times stood, between the people and its rulers. With few masterful exceptions, such as Nadir Shah, most sovereigns and ministers have come to the conclusion that it is politic to conciliate them, and both Muzaffer-ed-Din and the Atabeg-Azam have been careful to deal kindly with them. But the cry that the country is being sold to the foreigner is one which, if once raised—and it is a cry that naturally appeals to the more fanatical section of the *Mullahs*—it is very difficult, even for so resourceful a minister as was the Atabeg, to quell. At first it may not go beyond a whisper or a muttering, but even a whisper or a muttering ultimately reaches the ear of the sovereign, and then the consequences are apt to be ugly; for Muzaffer-ed-Din is not the man who would stand by a favourite Minister at any risk to himself. His eldest son, now the Veli Ahd, lives, as the Shah did until his accession, at Tabriz. Lacking some of his father's more amiable weaknesses, he is credited with imperious and impatient ambitions, and

he courts with equal assiduity the goodwill both of the *Mullahs* and of the Russians.

Seldom, even in the annals of an Oriental court, has an apparently all-powerful minister fallen in more dramatic circumstances than those which attended the Atabeg's recent dismissal. At the beginning of September, 1903, the news of the death of the Hakim-el-Mulk at Resht produced a profound sensation in Teheran. The Hakim-el-Mulk had long been one of the most confidential servants and advisers of the present Shah. A pupil of Dr. Tholozan, the distinguished French physician of the late Shah, the Hakim-el-Mulk was appointed in the same capacity to the Court of the present Shah, whilst the latter was still Heir-Apparent and resided at Tabriz. He accompanied Muzaffer-ed-Din to Teheran after Nasr-ed-Din's death, and at the beginning of 1900 he was promoted to the position of Wazir-i-Durbar, or First Chamberlain of the Court—a position which gave him a rank second only to that of the Atabeg-Azam himself. A few months later he travelled with the Shah to Europe, and until the spring of this year remained constantly in personal attendance upon the Sovereign. He had great wealth and many friends, and though he was himself a prudent man, and was careful to keep discreetly in the background, some of his clients were less cautious, and are said to have used his name and influence rather too freely in opposition to the Atabeg. In May the Hakim-el-Mulk was banished to Resht, nominally as Governor, and this was regarded as further evidence of the Atabeg's omnipotence. But Resht is, after all, not very far from Teheran. At any rate, it was not far enough to disarm the apprehensions of the Atabeg or of those who were anxious to take credit to themselves for interpreting

his secret thoughts. Early in September the Hakim-el-Mulk and his confidential servant died suddenly within a few hours in very suspicious circumstances.

Within a fortnight the Atabeg-Azam himself was dismissed from all his offices and banished, not merely from the capital, but from the Shah's dominion. In what precise relation his fall stands to the mysterious death of the Hakim-el-Mulk we shall probably never know. It may be that the tragic end of so old and long-trusted a servant as the Hakim aroused the Shah's wrath or awakened other suspicions. The Atabeg-Azam was, no doubt, "a man

> Of an unbounded stomach, ever ranking
> Himself with princes,"

and there are some shrewd observers who long ago suspected that he might not always remain content merely to rank himself with princes, but would some day aspire to rank himself above them. The widespread disturbances which broke out in so many different parts of Persia during the first half of 1903 had doubtless tended to weaken his position, and in spite of all he had done to earn the support of Russia, he had failed in some points to carry out her wishes, as, for instance, with regard to the Seistan Boundary Commission, over which she had hoped to exercise directly or indirectly a larger control, and also with regard to the Anglo-Persian Commercial Convention, which indeed ratified the *fait accompli* in favour of Russian diplomacy, but at any rate prevented the repetition of another such *coup* in the future. The causes, or some of the causes, which have brought about the Atabeg's downfall can at present be merely surmised. That the crisis was no ordinary one may be gathered from the fact, almost, if not absolutely, unprecedented

in the history of the present dynasty, that a member of the Kajar family has now been appointed Prime Minister. The Ain-ed-Dowleh, hitherto Governor of Teheran, is a grandson of Fath Ali Shah, the great-grandfather of Muzaffer-ed-Din, and besides being thus a distant cousin of the reigning Shah, he is married to one of Muzaffer-ed-Din's sisters, and one of his own sisters was married to the late Shah. He is ambitious and masterful, and has long been known to resent the ascendency of the ex-Grand Vizier. But if one may judge him by his record as Governor of Teheran, he is hardly likely to lift the government of Persia out of the slough of despond into which it has sunk, whilst, as a member of the Kajar family, he might easily add most seriously to the discredit into which the dynasty has already fallen. In the meantime the usual *chassez-croisez* is going on at Teheran. Many of those who had incurred the Atabeg's special displeasure, like the Nassir-el-Mulk, the Kawam-ed-Dowleh, etc., have been recalled to the capital, whilst his chief supporters and favourites have been involved in his disgrace. The ex-Grand Vizier himself has departed into exile, avowedly on a prolonged pilgrimage to Mecca. This is a time-honoured expedient which helps to keep the luckless traveller's head on his shoulders until he has passed the frontier.

CHAPTER XI

THE REVIVAL OF BABIISM

THAT the movement which bears the apostolic name of the religious martyr who was put to death at Tabriz more than half a century ago is still a living force in Persia is almost universally recognised. But to what extent and in what shape that force is likely to make itself decisively felt opinions differ very largely. Any survey, however brief, of the general condition of Persia would, however, be incomplete without some attempt to define the present position of Babiism, as its origin and evolution appear to be exceptionally characteristic of an important phase of Persian life.

Like the Hindu Aryans, Persian thinkers have at all times been distinguished for their passion for metaphysical inquiry coupled with inordinate imagination. They delight in abstract subtleties of thought and dialectical gymnastics, for the sake, it would seem, rather of the intellectual enjoyment which such exercises in themselves afford than in the hope of reaching any definite goal. Hence the impatience they have always shown of the restraints of cut-and-dried theology. Under the later kings of the Sassanide dynasty the priestly caste, though supported by the secular arm of the State, had been unable to maintain the authority of the Zoroastrian Church, which was

already completely undermined before the tide of Arab conquest swept over the country. The Semitic form of Islam imposed by the conquerors was only tolerated for a very short time. It succumbed to the Shia schism which represented a national reaction, intellectual and political as well as religious, though it nominally turned only on the superiority of Ali's claims to the Khalifate as against those of the three first successors of Mahomet. To preserve even the outward appearances of Shia uniformity it has been necessary to create in Persia, on lines not dissimilar to those of the old Zoroastrian priesthood, an ecclesiastical organisation which presents a closer analogy to an established church than is to be found elsewhere in the world of Islam. Even so, it is only an outward uniformity that has been preserved. It has indeed been asserted that in the whole of Persia there is not a single Mussulman who believes in all the tenets of Shiitic Islam without any admixture of extraneous doctrines. Amongst the masses Islam is overlaid with gross superstitions, largely compounded of native hagiology quite alien to its original spirit of rigid monotheism. Amongst the bulk of the more educated classes it has been refined away into intellectual agnosticism, or has merged into materialistic pantheism. Islam survives as the badge of a conservative institution for the protection of the vested interests of the ruling classes, as a war-cry for enlisting in their service the passions of popular superstitions, and also as a customary common denominator of heterogeneous schools of thought that accept its inherited forms and ceremonies, just as many Europeans continue to conform to the traditional practices of a Christian church long after they have rejected its dogmas, or ceased even to be influenced by

its spirit. The result has been, on the one hand, a lapse into mere sensualism, on the other, a tendency towards extreme asceticism, and sometimes a curious combination of both—an intellectual delight in the philosophic conceptions that underlie the latter and a material delight in the pleasures that satisfy the former. May it not be that what appear to us the anarchical conditions of spiritual life in such a country as Persia are but the natural reflex of the anarchical conditions of material existence? May not the spirit of scepticism and indifferentism which permeates the writings of the whole Sufi school of Persian poets and philosophers be largely due to the utter hopelessness of attempting to deduce any moral laws from the continuous vicissitudes which they experienced and witnessed in their own lives and in the lives of those around them? The procession of dynasties and rulers wading through blood to power only to be hurled back again by the same brutal process into the obscurity from which had each in turn emerged, the interminable recurrence of internal strife and external invasion, with their inevitable accompaniments of pestilence and famine, are apt merely to daze the European reader of Oriental chronicles. But what must have been the effect of such events upon those for whom they meant the ruin of their homes, the dispersion of their families, the loss of fortune, honours, possessions? Among Persian poets, none has preached the vanity of life in a form more attractive than Sádi, both to those who would seek compensation for it in the fullest measure of sensual enjoyment, and to those who, reading into his verses a symbolical meaning, would fain find in them an exhortation to the pursuit of spiritual emancipation from the thraldom of the senses.

As one of the shrewdest students of the spiritual life of Persia, M. de Gobineau, has observed, when one has witnessed two or three times in his life the progress of a Tartar Prince on his way to the execution of a predecessor—Mongol, Turk, or Arab—who had done the same by someone else before him, and when one has himself suffered numberless vicissitudes in consequence of such events; when one has been like Sádi a great personage, and then a common soldier, and then the prisoner of a Christian feudal chief; when one has worked as a navvy on the fortifications of the Count of Antioch, and wandered back afoot to Shiraz after infinite pain and labour, he may well be disposed to think that nothing that exists is real or, at least, has any substantial reality worth clinging to. To-day the public peace of Persia is no longer subject to such violent perturbations. At least, as far as we are concerned, the appearances of peace prevail, and few of us care or have occasion to look beyond the appearances. But for the Persians themselves, have the conditions very much changed? Do they not witness one day the sudden rise of this or that favourite of fortune and the next day his equally sudden fall? Have they not seen the Atabeg-Azam twice hold sway as the Shah's all-powerful Vizier, and twice hurled down from that pinnacle by a bolt from the blue? How many other ministers and governors have sat for a time in the seats of the mighty and been swept away by some intrigue as sordid as that to which they owed their own exaltation? And how many in humbler stations have been in the meantime the recipients of their unworthy favours or the victims of their arbitrary oppression? A village which but yesterday was fairly prosperous is beggared to-day by some neighbouring landlord

LOOKING TOWARDS ISFAHAN OVER THE BISTAGOON PLAIN (p. 144)

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higher up the valley, who, having duly propitiated those in authority, diverts for the benefit of his own estates the whole of its slender supply of water. The progress of a governor or royal prince, with all his customary retinue of ravenous hangers-on, eats out the countryside through which it passes more effectually than a flight of locusts. The visitation is as ruinous and as unaccountable. Is it not the absence of all visible moral correlation of cause and effect in these phenomena of daily life that has gone far to produce the stolid fatalism of the masses, the scoffing scepticism of the more educated classes, and from time to time the revolt of some nobler minds? Of such the most recent and perhaps the noblest of all became the founder of Babiism.

The story of Mirza Ali Muhammed, better known as the *Bab*, or gate through whom the new knowledge of a better life was to be attained, scarcely requires repetition. He was born in 1819 or 1820 at Shiraz, and acquired at an early age a great reputation for his learning in metaphysics and theology and for the purity and austerity of his life. A pilgrimage to Mecca and to the Shia shrines of Kerbela only served to complete his estrangement from Persian orthodoxy. On his return to Persia he began to preach openly against the corruption and vices of the clergy, and still professing the greatest veneration for the Prophet, used his Koran chiefly to justify his denunciations of the degenerate professors of the sacred book. Gradually, and in more secret conferences, he began to expound a new gospel, which was an implied, if not an explicit, negation of Islam. At the date of his "Manifestation," when he proclaimed himself to be "the Bab," in 1844, he was barely twenty-five years of age. Yet not only in his

own native town of Shiraz, but all over the South of Persia, he had recruited disciples amongst men of every age and rank and class. Some—and not the least influential—were ready to carry his message into the North, and it was through their agency that the new movement assumed the political character which precipitated the catastrophe. He himself remained throughout, both in his speeches and in his writings, essentially a religious agitator, though his claims to divine revelation and even to be regarded as an incarnation of the deity grew more and more outspoken and imperious. At Court and in the official bureaucracy, at any rate until the death of Muhammed Shah in 1848, there were many whose intellectual curiosity of metaphysical novelties inclined them to disregard the denunciations which poured in from the clergy of the revolutionary tendencies of the Bab's teachings, and at one moment the eccentric Grand Vizier, Hajji Mirza Aghassy, who had a mania for theological disputations, had nearly induced his master to invite the Bab to Teheran to meet in public conference the chief pundits of orthodoxy. But in the northern provinces, especially in Khorasan, in Mazenderan, and in Azerbaijan, the Babiist movement was destined rapidly to assume a character which could not but alarm the ruling classes. Perhaps it was the different temperament of the disciples who had undertaken to spread the new doctrine, or of the people to whom they preached; perhaps it was a chapter of accidents more difficult to account for. Anyhow, in the North the message of peace was soon converted into a message of war; and when Nasr-ed-Din Shah came to the throne he found the provinces nearest to his capital torn by sectarian strife. The military forces of the State were called into requisition, and

despite prodigies of individual valour, and many brilliant feats of arms, the Babis were overwhelmed successively in their two chief strongholds, a cold-blooded massacre in defiance of the plighted word of royal princes completing in both cases after the surrender of the survivors the restoration of the Shah's authority. But though the militant forces of Babiism had been crushed, the spirit which informed it was still unconquered. The fervour of its neophytes in the large cities had not broken out into deeds of violence, but by the light of what had already happened elsewhere, the teachings of the Bab, though not in themselves actually seditious, could no longer be regarded merely as an interesting subject of metaphysical speculation. The Bab, who had at first been placed under arrest in Shiraz and then conveyed in safe custody into the Caspian province of Ghilan, was now sent in chains to Tabriz, where, after being treated with every refinement of ignominy and cruelty, he was finally put to death on July 9th, 1850, together with one chosen companion who was faithful unto him to the end. When it was at last decided to take his life, he was led out to be shot in the public square outside the citadel, and the first volley left him unhurt. Had he immediately taken advantage of the impression made upon the crowd of spectators, who had assembled with mingled feelings to witness his execution and were probably just as ready to acclaim him as a prophet in whose favour God Himself had wrought a miracle as to jeer at his ignoble death, the whole course of Persian history might have been changed. But he was dazed and exhausted by his sufferings, and he fled blindly back into the citadel, where, in a guard-house in which he had sought refuge, the soldiers promptly despatched him.

The Bab was dead, but not Babiism. He was not the first, and still less the last, of a long line of martyrs who have testified that, even in a country gangrened with corruption and atrophied with indifferentism like Persia, the soul of a nation survives, inarticulate, perhaps, and in a way helpless, but still capable of sudden spasms of vitality. Was the Bab himself the creator of the movement which bears his name, or was he merely the exponent of ideas and sentiments which would have ripened even without him into maturity? It is the old question as to whether great men are only the fated product of an age in travail, or whether their genius fashions into a new shape the world in which they live and move and have their being. Certainly as far as the Bab is concerned, his personal activity hardly seems to account for the evolution of Babiism either during his own lifetime or since his death. Still less does the personal activity of his successors account for it. The execution of the Bab was followed by a period of wholesale persecution for his disciples throughout Persia, which culminated, in 1852, after a Babi attempt on the Shah's life, in an orgy of torture and bloodshed at Teheran when the Seven Martyrs and many others, including women and children, met their terrible fate with heroic fortitude. By this time almost all the leading adepts of the new religion had been destroyed, and the Bab's successor was compelled to seek refuge in exile at Baghdad. Mirza Yahya, upon whom the Bab's mantle was held to have descended, was a mere youth, only sixteen years of age, the son of a great personage who had been Governor of Teheran, but brought up, after his mother's death when he was still an infant, by the wife of one of the chief apostles of the Bab. Some say that a secret message from the Bab,

delivered after his execution, designated Mirza Yahya as his successor, others that he was chosen by a conclave of disciples on the strength of certain mysterious indications of peculiar moral fitness. Though he bore the title of Subh-i-Ezel, or Dawn of Eternity, in analogy to the title of Hazret-i-Ala or Supreme Highness, which the Bab had taken during the last years of his life, the part he played in the subsequent history of Babiism seems to have been inconspicuous. A half-brother of Mirza Yahya, Mirza Hussein Ali, thirteen years his senior, who had been imprisoned at Teheran on suspicion of complicity in the attempted assassination of the Shah, rejoined him at Baghdad, and soon practically usurped his authority, though nominally yielding him religious allegiance. Dissensions were rife at this period amongst the Babis, and the Persian pilgrims of Babi proclivity, who on their way to Kerbela used to visit the two brothers at Baghdad, were apt to fight over their respective claims to spiritual supremacy. The Persian Government ultimately urged the Porte to remove them both to some part of the Turkish Empire less frequented by Persians. In 1864 they were transferred to Constantinople and then to Adrianople. Here Mirza Hussein Ali, who had taken the title of Beha'-ullah, or "Splendour of God," openly claimed to be "He who was to be made manifest," whose advent the Bab himself had foretold. This claim, of course, involved the supersession of the Subh-i-Ezel, who had never been regarded as more than the successor or vicegerent of the Bab. Most of the Babis who had accompanied the two brothers in their exile went over to Beha'ullah's side, but those who still came on pilgrimage from Persia did not so readily acquiesce in his claims, and serious disturbances from time to time

occurred between the two factions. Finally the Porte decided to separate the two brothers. In 1868 Subh-i-Ezel and his few remaining adherents were sent to Cyprus, where they still reside, and Beha'ullah with his party was sent to Acre. From this moment Subh-i-Ezel's influence, such as it had been, ceased altogether. Beha'ullah not only became the recognised head of Babiism, but he composed voluminous scriptures, which gradually superseded the writings of the Bab himself, and he claimed even more emphatically than the Bab to be revered as a divine incarnation. Pilgrims from Persia flocked at one time to the modest court he held in Acre, and he used occasionally to receive a few privileged European visitors, such as Professor Browne, of Oxford, the chief English authority on Babiism, and the late Laurence Oliphant, who, from his latter-day retreat on Mount Carmel, used to keep up friendly relations with the leaders of a movement in which, as in all religious speculations, he was deeply interested. It was as Oliphant's guest that in 1885 I enjoyed the favour of Beha'ullah's hospitality, and under the same auspices were entertained by him a party of Americans in search of new spiritual truths, from whose visit, and more directly from the preachings of a Babi missionary, Ibrahim Khairullah, who lectured in America, there has sprung up an American branch of the Babi Church, which counts, it is said, some 4,000 adherents, chiefly in Chicago.

Beha'ullah died in 1892, and his eldest son, Abbas Effendi, maintains the succession at Acre, though his authority has been disputed by a younger brother. How far the influence of Acre continues to make itself felt amongst the Babis generally, it is hard to say. Regular communication is kept up between Persia and

Acre, both by pilgrimages and confidential messengers; and the sacred books of Beha'ullah and Abbas Effendi are widely read by the Babi communities. That the latter are still very numerous and spread throughout the length and breadth of Persia there can be no doubt. In all the large cities, in Shiraz and Yezd, in Isfahan and Tabriz, and even in the capital, their adherents are to be found amongst all classes of the population, amongst officials and soldiers, amongst merchants and artisans, as well as amongst the humblest of the people. Amongst the rural population also, and especially in the villages around Isfahan, Kum, and Kashan, and throughout Khorasan, they have a large following. Their total strength is estimated by competent authorities at nearly one and a half millions, or about 20 per cent. of the total population of Persia. But all such estimates must be largely guesswork, as the most convinced Babis cannot make any open profession of their faith; and it is difficult to distinguish between those who have fully accepted the religious teachings of Babiism and those who merely sympathise with its reforming tendencies. Though there has been no general proscription of Babis by the State since 1852, the hostility of the orthodox clergy towards them has never relented, and they have been constantly liable, not only to savage outbreaks of popular fanaticism, as in Yezd in 1891, and again this year in many places, but to the fitful vindictiveness of the authorities as in Isfahan, where in 1878, and again in 1888, fresh names were added to their long roll of martyrs. The aggravated misrule of the last few years, with its premonitions of impending national disintegration, has unquestionably brought vast numbers of recruits to their ranks. They maintain, indeed, that

their objects are not in any way political, and quote the warning issued by the Subh-i-Ezel after the Bab's death, that the fight must be fought with spiritual and not with material weapons, as well as Beha'ullah's injunction that it is better to be killed than to kill. The predominant tendency at the present day is in fact to give prominence to the ethical rather than to the theological aspect of Babiism, and from the latter point of view, to dwell upon the essential truths which underlie all "manifestations" of divine origin rather than on the outward forms which differentiate them. The new dispensation should therefore, it is claimed, be regarded chiefly as the continuation and fulfilment of the earlier Mosaic, Christian, and Muhammedan dispensations. Does not the Jew still wait for the promised Messiah, the Christian for the second advent of Christ, the Mussulman for the appearance of a Mahdi? Babiism is but the "manifestation" they are all equally expecting, and the evolution it has undergone, even within the short period since the Bab gave his first message to the world, precludes any claim to rigid doctrinal finality. The Babis certainly profess, and within the measure of their limited opportunities, have practised tolerance and good will towards all, Christians and Jews, Sufis and Zoroastrians, and they talk with enthusiasm of the universal brotherhood of man and a millennium in which wars and civil strife shall cease.

Socially one of the most interesting features of Babiism is the raising of women to a much higher plane than she is usually admitted to in the East. The Bab himself had no more devoted a disciple than the beautiful and gifted lady, known as Kurrat-el-Ain, the "Consolation of the Eyes," who, having shared all the dangers of the first apostolic missions in the north,

challenged and suffered death with virile fortitude, as one of the Seven Martyrs of Teheran. No memory is more deeply venerated or kindles greater enthusiasm than hers, and the influence which she wielded in her lifetime still enures to her sex. That women, whom orthodox Islam barely credits with the possession of a soul, are freely admitted to the meetings of Babis, gives their enemies, the *Mullahs,* ample occasion to blaspheme. But they have never produced a tittle of evidence in support of the vague charges of immorality they are wont to bring against the followers of the new creed. Communism and socialism are also often imputed to them, and some of them appear to have borrowed from the West the terminology of advanced democracy. Probably Babiism is still in a state of flux, and represents, apart from its doctrinal aspects, an association of many heterogeneous elements loosely bound together by a common spirit of revolt against the scandalous depravity of the Court, the corruption of the ruling classes, and the intolerance and greed of the orthodox clergy.

Perhaps the best proof of the widespread influence of Babiism is the attention which the Russians have paid to it. One of their ablest agents, Captain Toumanky, has made careful studies of the Babi movement in all its bearings, and translated the most important of its scriptures into Russian. Throughout Persia they keep in close touch with its leaders, thus acquiring valuable sources of information amongst all classes, and on Russian territory outside the Persian frontier they treat the Babis with marked favour, as, for instance, at Ashkabad, where they have been given land by the Russian authorities for the erection of a conventicle. It is, however, difficult even for the Russians always to

hunt with the hounds and run with the hare, and during the recent riots at Isfahan the Babis who tried to seek refuge at the Russian Consulate found it closed against them, and were massacred at its very gates. Even amongst the Persian official classes Babiism is supposed to have found protectors in high places, the Atabeg-Azam himself having been credited with a desire to stand well with the Babis, though he is the last man to whom their moral aspirations would appeal. He was, however, a strong believer in the policy of making friends unto himself in every camp, and whilst cultivating the good-will of the *Mullahs*, he no doubt sought to impress upon the Babis that they might have worse enemies than him. But the outbreaks which have taken place this year (May–June, 1903) at so many and far-distant centres as Yezd and Isfahan, Tabriz and Shiraz, show that if the Babis really imagined they could put their trust in him they were leaning on a broken reed. Earlier in the year, in February, there had been some anti-Babi riots in Teheran in connection with the burial of a reputed Babi, but the authorities put them down, the initiative, it is worth noting, having been taken by a party of Cossacks, belonging to General Kosagowsky's brigade, amongst whom were several Babis, who at once intervened vigorously for the protection of their co-religionists. In the provinces, however, the word was apparently passed round to give the *Mullahs* a free hand. Ever since the Shah's return from Europe in the autumn of 1902 the attitude of the orthodox clergy had caused some apprehension at Teheran. The extravagance of the Court, the Russian loans, the appreciation of the cost of living, and the general distress and misery of the country, had intensified popular discontent, and it was feared that the more

fanatical *Mullahs* might give voice to it by raising a dangerous cry that the country was being sold to the Infidels. At such times it is no small advantage to have ready to hand an inoffensive and unprotected community upon whom the passions of the mob can be deflected. The savage massacres of Babis enacted at different points of the kingdom have been the worst that have taken place since 1852, but the *Mullahs* were for the time being appeased, and the Atabeg-Azam could boast of having once more restored peace to the realm of the enlightened and humane Sovereign, upon whom the most noble Order of the Garter had just been conferred. Babiism, however, has lived through worse days than these, and under Muzaffer-ed-Din Shah, as under his father, Nasr-ed-Din, the blood of martyrs may have served but to quicken the seeds of a new harvest.

Though unconnected with Babiism, there are two other recent developments in the religious domain which may as well be noted here. The survival of a faithful remnant of the ancient fire-worshippers of Persia has begun to attract the attention and sympathy of the wealthy and influential Parsee communities of India. These Zoroastrians, or *Ghebrs* as they are more commonly called, only number about 10,000 altogether, and most of them inhabit Yezd and Kerman. But as small traders, and even more as gardeners, in which capacity they enjoy considerable reputation, they are to be found scattered all over Persia. The Bombay Parsees have of late taken a very practical interest in the fate of their Persian co-religionists. They have not only given them local support in matters of worship and education, but they now maintain a regular agent for their benefit at Teheran. He has,

of course, no official status, but his friendly representations carry some weight with the Central Government. The Parsees are both wealthy and generous, and they know how to approach the ruling classes of Persia.

The Nestorians, or as they prefer to call themselves, the Syrians of the highlands of Kurdistan, are one of the most ancient and interesting of the Christian communities of Asia. On both sides of the frontier—under Turkish and under Persian rule—they have succeeded in maintaining an ecclesiastical organisation, differing probably but little from that of the early ages of Christianity, though they have had their own sectarian quarrels amongst themselves, and those on the Turkish side of the frontier entered into communion with Rome in the seventeenth century under a separate Patriarch known as the Patriarch of Babylon. The Persian Nestorians preserved complete religious autonomy coupled with certain political rights of self-government until quite recently. But as they saw the latter gradually whittled down by their Persian rulers, a considerable section threw itself a few years ago into the arms of Russia. More than half of the Persian Nestorians, including three bishops, were received into the bosom of the Russian Orthodox Church, and a party of Russian priests under an Archimandrite were sent down to take charge of the new flock. The political results have not, it appears, so far quite fulfilled the expectations of the converts, as Russian diplomacy, busy with other things, has failed to fight their battles at Teheran with the energy which had been hoped for. But Russia, who knows the uses of spiritual patronage in Eastern countries, will, no doubt, set matters right as soon as the moment comes for turning the ecclesiastical allegiance of the Nestorians to practical account.

THE HALL OF FORTY COLUMNS AT ISFAHAN (p. 135)

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CHAPTER XII

FROM TEHERAN TO ISFAHAN

LORD SALISBURY recommended the use of large scale maps to students of Asiatic politics. Still more useful, as far as Persia is concerned, would be a map showing the proportion of cultivated to uncultivated land as it is to-day, as it has been in the past, and as it might be in the future under an intelligent and honest administration. Our maps show clearly enough the well-known desert plains which extend over a large belt of Eastern Persia, but they give no indication whatever of the infinitesimal proportion in which cultivated lands stand to arid wastes in the rest of Persia. So trifling and inconspicuous are the scattered patches of cultivation when compared with the vast tracts of sterile wilderness that Persia has been not inaptly described as "a series of small deserts in a big desert." Yet with the exception of the salt deserts and the bare rock of the great mountain ranges hardly any land in Persia should be barren. Wherever a perennial flow of water can be brought to it the soil is abundantly fertile. Nothing is more striking than the suddenness with which,

> "Along some strip of herbage strown
> That just divides the desert from the sown,"

one passes again and again in the course of a day's

journey out of the bare sun-scorched wilderness into an oasis of verdant fields and shady groves. There is nothing to differentiate the soil of the oasis from that of the wilderness except that the one is parched, the other is blessed with water. In no country, therefore, is the question of irrigation of more paramount importance than in Persia, yet in none is it more criminally neglected by its rulers.

The Persian peasant does his best to eke out with the limited resources at his disposal the scanty stock of water which nature, unassisted, supplies, and the elaborate system of *kanāts*, or underground aqueducts, dug out of the hard soil in order to distribute over the largest possible area the meagre output of some slender spring or mountain stream, testifies to his indefatigable industry. The mounds of earth, like exaggerated mole-hills, thrown up from the shafts which have been sunk at frequent intervals to dig these *kanāts*, or, subsequently, to keep them free from obstruction, are a conspicuous feature in the Persian landscape, and a grateful one to the traveller, as they always indicate the vicinity of a village, and with it a break in the monotony of the great drab-coloured wastes—unless indeed, as is too often the case, they are merely abandoned *kanāts* bearing witness to past prosperity and present decay. Though sometimes they are carried for two or three miles across the plain from the foot-hills of the mountain range to some specially fertile patch of land, and represent a vast expenditure of human labour, the *kanāt* system is after all only a primitive makeshift. Persia wants water-storage on a much larger and more adequate scale. The winter snows and rains, though of short duration, are abundant enough, but they run for the greater part to waste.

Pouring with torrential violence down the precipitous flanks of the denuded mountain ranges, they plough deep furrows at random across the plains until, in the great majority of cases, they lose themselves in a salt marsh or disappear by the mere process of evaporation under the fierce Persian sun. Yet this waste might be easily prevented, or at least mitigated, at no great outlay of money or engineering skill. The network of mountains which spreads over the greater part of Persia offers incomparable facilities for storing water in a number of local reservoirs by damming up the narrow gorges through which the winter rains stream down into the plains. At Isfahan, for instance, at the time of my visit in October, 1902, the broad bed of the Zendeh Rud had been absolutely dry for two months, to the serious injury of one of the most fertile plains in Persia. The water famine in the city and its immediate vicinity was partly due to the action of large and influential landowners, who had recently diverted an excessive volume of water higher up the river in order to irrigate their own properties at the expense of the villages of the plain; but a *bund* could be easily constructed to hold up during flood time the waters of the Zendeh Rud, which now run to waste in a salt marsh some fifty or sixty miles east of the city, and there would then be a constant water supply, abundant enough to allow cultivation to be developed at every available point, without robbing Peter to pay Paul. Something also might probably be done in Persia with artesian wells, though on this point expert opinion differs, owing to the peculiarities of the geological formations. Experiments of a very promising character were made some years ago by an Englishman in a waterless district in the neighbourhood of Kerman,

but before their success could be definitely established the Persian authorities tried to defraud him of his rights, and before any redress could be obtained the unfortunate pioneer died of fever.

Irrigation unquestionably offers a large field for remunerative enterprise, but from the Persians themselves little or nothing can be hoped for. There is no public spirit to take the initiative of such enterprise. Works of public utility do not enter into the scheme of Persian government, and the large landowners, who mostly belong to the official classes, are content to amass a fortune by squeezing the wretched tiller of the soil. The dearth of water is, in fact, a powerful instrument in the hands of the ruling class for putting pressure on the people. By arbitrary interference with the slender water supply, which is life or death to him, the small landowner can be made to sell on the great man's terms, and the tenant-labourer's share in the produce of the soil he tills can be ground down to a minimum to swell the profits of the landlord. The system works admirably for the *buzurghan*, or "the great men." The capital they invest in the purchase of a village usually returns 40–60 per cent. per annum, and if the screw has been judiciously applied it may return as much as 200 per cent. per annum—until the whirligig of fortune brings the great man under the heel of a greater man, who promptly annexes a large share of his ill-gotten gains.

In times like the present, when cupidity and extravagance are more than ever rampant in the highest places, and a vague sense of impending national disaster is creeping over the whole country, all the evils inseparable from the social system of Persia are multiplied and aggravated. The six days' journey down

from Teheran to Isfahan last autumn intensified the impression of universal neglect and decay which my visit to Persia eighteen years ago had already left on my mind. With the single exception of the carriage-road built, and until then maintained at a considerable loss, by the Imperial Bank of Persia, there was not a single sign of progress to be noted anywhere. The villages are few and far between, and across the intervening tracts of barren wilderness the only signs of human life are the long files of mules and camels, whose constant footfall has trodden out the only roads that the Persian knows of. Kum, second of the holy cities of Persia, still contrives to live on the devotion of the pilgrims who flock from all parts of the Shia world to worship at the shrine of Fatima-el-Masuma, the sister of Imam Reza, and the great golden dome of the mosque in which she is buried, flashing in the evening sun against a background of purple hills, shed, as I approached it, a glamour of ancient grandeur over the maze of ruinous alleys and dilapidated bazaars into which the town resolves itself on closer inspection. Of the stone quays which once lined the river banks, of the stately caravanserais and the "wel-built, sweet, and wel-furnished" houses of which Le Brun, as quoted by Lord Curzon, tells us a couple of centuries ago, scarcely a trace remains. Kashan, which was still, not many years ago, an important industrial centre, famous for its silk and satin fabrics, as well as for its pottery and copper wares, has fallen into even greater decay. Its industries languish, its population diminishes, and the inhabited quarters of the town are almost lost amidst the ruins of its former self. Everywhere on this great highway between the modern and the ancient capitals of Persia the squalor of decrepitude and poverty seems

to have increased; deserted villages, abandoned caravanserais, exhausted *kanāts,* broken-down bridges, mark the steady progress of decay. The picture which the country itself presents would be intolerably depressing were it not for the perpetual enchantment of sunny days and starlit nights, and an invigorating atmosphere of incomparable purity, whilst every morning and every evening the "false dawn" and the afterglow, flooding the whole landscape of plain and mountain with their luminous glory, seem in very truth to "shed love on all that lives and peace on lifeless things."

Isfahan itself is to-day merely *magni nominis umbra.* The same circle of delicately scarped hills overlooks a fertile plain of green fields and leafy orchards, studded with stately plane trees, as in the time of the great Shah Abbas, but of the splendid city which excited the wonder and admiration of European travellers in the days when Elizabeth reigned in England and Akbar at Delhi only enough has survived to mark the contrast between the Persia of the past and the Persia of to-day. Whole quarters of the city are deserted and in ruins; of the bazaars, which were once the finest and most thriving marts of Western Asia, many are entirely abandoned, and but few more than partially tenanted, though the busy scenes of Eastern life which may still be seen in some of them can hardly be surpassed for diversity and picturesqueness; the Chehar Bagh still exists, but its avenues of giant plane trees have long since been ruthlessly thinned; water no longer flows down them through a succession of marble channels and ornamental basins; the palaces and mansions which overlooked the terraced gardens have sunk into shapeless mud heaps; and even the splendid Madresseh of Shah Hussein, which twenty years ago was still one

of the noblest sights of Isfahan, has been robbed of most of its beautiful tiles, and is fast falling into ruinous decay. The same fate is overtaking the pillared galleries of the monumental bridge of Ali Verdi Khan, by far the most magnificent of the five great bridges which span the broad and shallow bed of the Zendeh Rud. No trace whatever remains of the Hazar Jerib, the great royal pleasaunce of "a thousand acres." In spite of the neglect with which the Kajar dynasty seems deliberately to treat every reminder of the greatness of their Sefavi predecessors, the superb mosque erected by Shah Abbas on the Meidan still remains unique, but not unscathed, in the glory of its green-and-blue tiled dome and minarets; but in the ancient palace of the Sefavi princes, where the Zill-es-Sultan now resides as Governor, the few clumsy attempts that have been made at restoration have done more to mar the artistic beauty of the buildings than the ravages of deliberate vandalism. In the loggia of the Chehil Sitoon, or Hall of Forty Columns, the graceful mirror-work ornamentation of the walls and pillars has been torn down to make room for daubs of garish paint, and the hall itself, once the throne-room of the greatest of Persian monarchs, is now used as a godown for the storage of the Zill-es-Sultan's travelling tents and carpets; the blue and gold arabesques of the gorgeous vaulted ceilings are cracked and crumbling away in places, and the six immense oil paintings, in which the martial prowess of the Sefavi kings and the magnificence of their courtly pageants were blazoned forth with no mean artistic skill, are growing grimy with the dust of years. The entire population of the city, with the villages of the surrounding plain, is not estimated to-day at more than a quarter of a million,

whereas two-and-half centuries ago the estimates for the city alone varied between 600,000 and 1,100,000, and within ten leagues of its walls Chardin counted 1,500 villages. The days are indeed past when it was the proud boast of its people that Isfahan was half the world—*Isfahan nusf-el-jehan.*

Yet Isfahan has had the advantage of being governed for the last twenty-eight years by a Prince who enjoys the reputation of being in many respects the strongest and ablest man in Persia, and certainly in the Royal Family of Persia. The Zill-es-Sultan is the eldest living son of the late Shah, though, as his mother was not of royal birth, he was not entitled to the succession. His power and prestige were at one time immense, for he was not only Governor of Isfahan, but of all the southern provinces of Persia—Fars, Arabistan, Luristan, Kurdistan, Yezd, and half a dozen others. He ruled almost as an independent Prince over two-thirds of the whole kingdom, and he ruled with undisputed vigour and energy, maintaining order and security with an iron hand. He had even reinforced his authority by creating an army under his own control of over 20,000 men, whose training, equipment, and discipline were, at any rate, incomparably superior to anything that the rest of Persia could show. But his influence and the leaning towards England with which he was credited gave umbrage to Russia, and her agents worked hand in hand with the many enemies, whom he owed as much to his good qualities as to his faults, to secure his downfall. Summoned suddenly to Teheran, in 1888, he obeyed the summons, relying upon the special favour and affection which his father had always displayed towards him. But Nasr-ed-Din's mind had been effectually poisoned against him, and when he

GOING TO VISIT THE ZILL-ES-SULTAN

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came back to Isfahan, he returned merely as Governor of the one province. All his other provinces had been taken away from him, and his army had been disbanded or drafted away. He is believed to have accepted his disgrace with Oriental fatalism, and in a spirit of dutiful resignation to his father's will. Whatever may have been his earlier ambitions, he would seem to have been equally mindful of his father's wishes after the latter's death, for as soon as the news of Nasr-ed-Din's assassination reached him he hastened to telegraph to his brother, the Vali Ahd at Tabriz, assuring him of his own loyalty, and holding himself personally responsible for that of his province. There are, nevertheless, many who hold that it would have been far better for Persia if he had succeeded to the throne instead of Muzaffer-ed-Din. Though he was now fifty-two years old, the two decades which had nearly elapsed since I was first received by the Zill-es-Sultan did not appear to have impaired either his vigour of mind or his alertness of manner. Of his qualities as a firm, if masterful, ruler, I can only speak from hearsay; but in the course of the long conversation with which I was honoured by his Highness, I had ample opportunity of appreciating his perspicacity and astuteness, as well as his ready wit and humour.

Isfahan, like the rest of Persia, was suffering from the severe depression of trade, due in part to unfavourable economic conditions—and especially the relentless depreciation of the kran, the unit of silver currency—and in part to growing anxiety with regard to political developments in Teheran. Popular discontent appeared in Central Persia to be more profound or more freely expressed than in the North, and people asked with undisguised bitterness what was to be the end of

the profligate course of extravagance upon which Teheran has entered. In spite of the establishment of a Russian Consulate in a city where there are not, I believe, a dozen Russian subjects to be protected, and of the importation of a guard of Russian Cossacks—whose appearance, however, hardly compared favourably with that of the smart Indian *sowars* who act as escort to the British Consul-General—Russian influence had so far acquired little direct hold over this part of Persia, and those who took the most despondent view of the future of their country still turned with almost pathetic confidence for help to England, and to England alone. Amongst the more thoughtful, however, that confidence seemed to be rapidly waning. "England," they said, "is lavish enough of her assurances of friendship, and we do not distrust her intentions; but what we want are deeds, not words, and the deeds are not forthcoming. To-day she still has many friends in the South of Persia, but the time is coming when it will be too dangerous to be counted amongst her friends, if she will not raise a finger to help them. If we are to be left to the tender mercies of new masters from the North, we must ultimately make terms with them, and England will learn too late what those terms may mean to her." I am quite aware that the value of such language from Oriental lips must be largely discounted, but it is none the less significant and worth noting that, whereas formerly England was the only foreign Power whose existence seemed to be in any way recognised at Isfahan, to-day she is already being weighed in the scale against Russia, and the balance is little more than even. What was, perhaps, even more significant was that just before my arrival a large order for 700 bales of cotton prints from Russia had

for the first time been placed in the Isfahan market. Hitherto, though the activity of the Russian Bank at Teheran had already made itself adversely felt, Russian trade had only made experimental incursions on a small scale into this field, but the operation I have just mentioned was evidently intended as the prelude to a campaign of bounty-fed competition with British trade in Central as well as in Northern Persia.

CHAPTER XIII

THROUGH THE BAKHTIARI MOUNTAINS TO THE PERSIAN GULF

FROM Isfahan to the Persian Gulf the most frequented route is that which leads past the ruins of Persepolis to Shiraz and thence descends the great mountain ladder of Fars to Bushire. But I had travelled by it during my former visit to Persia, and, within the last few years, British enterprise has opened up a new route to the Persian Gulf, which, if adequate support is forthcoming, should prove of both commercial and political importance, while it certainly is what our American cousins would call "the great scenic route" of Southern Persia. I decided therefore to travel through the Bakhtiari Mountains and down the Karun to Muhammerah.

It is difficult to explain the physical charm of Persian travel. I have done my share of travelling in the highways and byways of the East from the Syrian Desert to the Great Wall of China, but Persia has a mysterious attraction of which I have nowhere found the like. Not the Persia of the towns, even such as Isfahan, still clothed with some majestic remnants of a magnificent past, or Shiraz, where the scent of old-time roses still hangs about the gardens where Hafiz and Sádi used to walk, and the shadow of ancient cypresses still falls athwart their tombs, but the Persia of far-spread desert

IN THE BAKHTIARI MOUNTAINS

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and lofty mountain, with its rare oases and hidden valleys; the Persia of immense spaces and infinite solitude broken only by "the footfall mute of the slow camel, which strikes and makes no sound," or by the tinkling bells of a more bustling caravan of pack-mules; the Persia of brilliant sun-bathed days and of solemn starlit nights, and of those yet more precious hours of morn and eve when by the Great Magician's wand the whole earth and the heavens above are turned to glory. At daybreak the camp is astir, and before the sun has scaled the purple crest of the furthermost mountains the tents are struck, the baggage animals are being packed for the march, and one starts off on his pony for the morning's ride, which should cover the best part of the day's journey. Pretty well the whole of Persia, after the first steep climb from the lowlands, whether of the Caspian or of the Persian Gulf, is a lofty plateau varying between three and five thousand feet above the level of the sea, broken by successive ranges of mountains mostly ten to twelve thousand feet high, and rising in parts to much greater altitudes. The morning air, even in the early autumn, is always crisp, sometimes frosty, but long before one has reached the midday halting-ground, the sun pours down with conquering force. In the course of the five or six hours' ride, which makes a fair forenoon stage, delicious canters across small and fairly level plateaus have alternated with steep climbs up and down the precipitous slopes of intervening hills, where your pony casts many an appealing glance at you as, leading him by the reins, you try to pull him down some particularly bad drop until, uttering his sad grunt, he at last makes up his mind to step down on all four feet at once. By the time the sun has

reached the zenith, both man and beast are ready to welcome the sudden shade of trees, with a noise of rushing waters, which invites repose after a refreshing plunge in a clear pool and a frugal meal. Presently one's caravan, which toils at a slower pace, unresting throughout the day, passes on its way to the next camping-ground with a jingling of many bells and a hum of urgent voices. It will be time enough to follow it up in another hour. Then, when the shadows are beginning to lengthen, we shall come up to our camp as it is being pitched for the night on the edge of some other strip of herbage, "whose tender green fledges the river's lip." Whilst the evening meal is being prepared the sun sinks, as it sank yesterday and will sink again to-morrow, out of the golden sky behind long-drawn ranges of delicately chiselled mountains, which reflect in turn every tint of the painted heavens. But has it sunk? Suddenly the sky, which had already faded from a pale sea-green into an ashen grey, flashes up once more into crimson and gold, and every hill-top is flushed with a responsive glow. But it is only a transient moment of infinite beauty, the brief spell of the "after-glow," and long before sleep, though seldom slow to come, has descended upon our camp the stars have peeped out, first one by one, and then in their millions, until the whole firmament throbs with the eternal flame of their quivering lamps. Save the occasional bark of a jackal wandering hungrily around, and the steady crunching of the mules and ponies as they feed, tethered a few yards off from our tents, there is not a sound to break the deep silence of the night, until once more :—

> "morning in the bowl of night
> Has flung the stone that puts the stars to flight.
> And, lo! the hunter of the East has caught
> The Sultan's turret in a noose of light."

To those in whom some inherited instincts of nomadic life still linger I would above all recommend a spring or an autumn journey through the Bakhtiari mountains from Isfahan to the Persian Gulf. Geographically, and within certain limitations politically, the country of the Bakhtiaris belongs to Persia, but, though in Persia, it is in most respects not of Persia—at least, not of modern Persia. Sturdy oak trees cling to the flanks of the rugged mountain gorges, through which the Karun and its tributaries have carved a way for their turquoise blue waters, unsullied as the snows that feed them; oak and beech and plane tree cluster round every mountain spring; the spacious groves which clothe the greater part of the undulating uplands lack only a carpet of green grass to complete their resemblance to an English park; after the first autumn rains, yellow and mauve crocuses spread a network of colour over the brown soil before the tribesman's primitive plough prepares it to receive the seed for the winter harvest. Stern as the face of nature often is amidst the towering crags and deep ravines of the Bakhtiari mountains, it seldom wears that forbidding aspect of utter desolation peculiar to the waterless, sun-scorched regions between Teheran and Isfahan, and between Isfahan and Shiraz, which, though not devoid of a certain grim picturesqueness, is apt to grow depressing in its weird monotony. It is an easy march of about eighteen days from Isfahan to Ahwaz on the Karun, whence a steamer runs down to Muhammerah in a couple of days. The interest of the journey is perhaps more diversified than that of any other expedition which can be as easily compassed in Persia. For it takes the traveller out of what may still be called the heart of Persia proper, namely, the plain of Isfahan,

through the mountain fastnesses of semi-independent tribesmen, down into the great alluvial plains washed by the Persian Gulf, where the population, though owning allegiance to the Shah, is mainly Arab by race and language. Our caravan was itself a microcosm of this strange medley of tongues and peoples. Some of our muleteers were pure Persians, whilst others were Arabs from the Karun valley; our cook was a Christian Arab from the Tigris, and one of our servants was a Persian Turk from the northern provinces. Bakhtiari tribesmen from time to time swelled our retinue, and to add to its picturesque variety an Indian *fakir*, who had been on pilgrimage to the Shia shrines of Meshed and Kum, and was proceeding to the yet holier shrines of Kerbela and Karsimein, under a vow to recite during the middle watch of every night certain chapters of the Koran, tacked himself on to us as we entered the Bakhtiari country, always ready to fag for our servants, collecting firewood and carrying water, in return for protection and a daily bowl of rice. The Bakhtiari country is, like the rest of Persia, but sparsely populated, and when one has left the villages of the Zendeh Rud and Bistagoon valleys behind him—a slender thread of verdure winding across a broad yellow belt of desert between the hills encircling Isfahan thirty miles away and the first buttresses of the Bakhtiari mountains proper—hardly another substantial village, except one or two that have clustered round the summer residences of the great Bakhtiari chiefs, is to be met with until the Karun is reached. But the trade route which has been opened up of recent years through this region has familiarised the people with the wants of travellers, and so long as the latter

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are content with very simple fare, they need have no anxiety about supplies in the shape of milk and eggs and fowls and an occasional sheep.

The possibility of developing a new trade route, or rather of reviving a very ancient one, from the Persian Gulf to Isfahan by the Karun river and across the Bakhtiari mountains, had suggested itself in the first half of the last century to the eager young explorer who afterwards, as Sir Henry Layard, became a prominent figure in the diplomacy of the Near East. In fact, but for the sudden downfall of Muhammed Taki Khan, the idea might then and there have taken practical shape, for Layard had established strong claims to the friendship and gratitude of the great Bakhtiari chieftain, and the latter had been ready and anxious to forward the scheme. But that opportunity passed away, as did another and still more propitious one, when an Anglo-Indian force actually occupied the Karun valley from Muhammerah to Ahwaz during the Persian expedition of 1857. Twenty years later Mr. (now Sir) George Mackenzie, an active partner in the firm of Gray, Paul and Co. at Bushire, one of the numerous firms affiliated to the British India Steam Navigation Company, proceeded to Teheran with fresh offers of co-operation from another powerful Ilkhani of the Bakhtiaris, but the negotiations proved abortive, and it was not until 1888 that Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, then British Minister to Persia, inserted the thin end of the wedge by inducing the Shah to issue a special Firman throwing the Karun river open to foreign navigation. Such, at least, was the purport of the Firman, though the Persian authorities lost no time, as I shall have occasion to

show later on, in trying to withdraw with the left hand, by local obstruction, what they had given at Teheran with the right.

Immensely exaggerated as were the expectations based at the time upon the paper promises of the Shah's Firman, the first step had been made, and the enterprising firm which had undertaken, on the invitation of the British Government, to act as the pioneers of navigation on the Karun was quick to realise the urgency of the second step. Immediately upon the issue of the Firman Messrs. Lynch Brothers, who had been connected for half a century with the navigation of the Tigris, placed one of their steamers on the Karun, and Mr. H. B. Lynch proceeded to investigate on the spot the question of road communications between that river and Isfahán by travelling through the Bakhtiari country and renewing relations with the chiefs. A valuable report of his journey appeared in September, 1890, in the same number of the *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* as Lord Curzon's address on the Karun river and the geography of South-Western Persia. The mills of diplomacy, however, grind slowly, and another eight years elapsed before the protracted negotiations were brought to a conclusion. In 1898 an agreement was arrived at under the auspices of the British Legation and with the sanction and ultimate guarantee of the Persian Government, under which Messrs. Lynch undertook to build, on behalf of the Bakhtiari chiefs, a caravan road available for mule traffic from Ahwaz on the Karun to Isfahan. In 1900 the two important bridges which had to be thrown across the upper waters of the Karun at Godar-i-Balukat and across its tributary, the Ab-i-Bazuft, at Pul Amarat—the only

two suspension bridges in Persia—were completed, and the new road ready for traffic.

The "Lynch road," as it is commonly called, would probably receive but scant praise from Western travellers unaccustomed to the break-neck tracks over which the traffic of the East has been carried for centuries in all mountainous regions; but, given the conditions under which it was constructed, and the nature of the country it traverses, it is certainly no mean achievement, and it compares, at any rate, very favourably with its chief rival, the caravan road from Shiraz to Bushire. Between Isfahan, which lies at an altitude of 5,200 feet above sea-level, and Ahwaz, which is barely 300 feet above the sea, it has to scale four distinct chains of mountains, of which the highest—the Mungasht—rises to over 12,000 feet, besides the many lesser ranges which form their buttresses. This great mountain system, which runs roughly north-west and south-east —*i.e.* at right angles to the Lynch road—has been successfully negotiated, and though for six or seven out of an eighteen days' march we had daily ascents and descents of 2,000 feet and more, the highest level which the road reached was 7,800 feet. Persian muleteers are, in fact, so accustomed to the roughest mountain tracks that there are few slopes, however precipitous, up and down which a track cannot be engineered to meet their modest requirements. One of the most difficult bits of work in laying out the new caravan route was to find some way of turning the lofty Zirrah range, which forms the second of the four mountain barriers I have alluded to, and in the winter, after heavy snows, is quite impassable. A way was ultimately discovered by following the deep gorge of a stream which seems to have cleft the range in two as with a giant's knife. Along

this gorge, to which the muleteers have given a picturesque name which may be rendered as the Gorge of the Pulling up and Letting down of Skirts,—in allusion to their practice of pulling their baggy trousers up at the waist when there is a steep ascent and letting them down when there is a sharp descent,—the track, often blasted out of the solid rock, now rises and falls in a series of bold zigzags, sometimes climbing round the edge of a blank wall of rock several hundred feet high, sometimes plunging down to the very bed of the foaming, thundering torrent. On either side the cliffs rise in serried masses and jagged teeth to a towering crest line of embattled peaks more than 10,000 feet above the level of the sea. So sheer are these tremendous battlements that the sun only reaches for a few hours at high noon the deep ravine they mount guard over. Nevertheless the track is so skilfully laid out, and on the whole so well kept up, that there are few points which offer any serious difficulty even for heavily loaded mules. But it is a long détour, which substantially increases the day's mileage, the gorge itself extending over five miles. So, except during the worst months of the year, when the snow lies deep on the mountain tops, the muleteers, having no eyes for the incomparable grandeur of the new route, prefer to take a short cut, infinitely more arduous, straight over the Zirrah range, up and down its precipitous slopes, of which no attempt has been made to mitigate the natural steepness by any scientific road building. Another bad place along this route is immediately beyond the bridge over the Ab-i-Bazuft, as one comes from the North. I had surveyed it at my leisure as we descended the opposite range to our camping ground on the previous evening, and there seemed to be no break of any kind in the sheer

THE GORGE OF THE "PUTTING UP AND PUTTING DOWN OF SKIRTS"

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wall over 2,000 feet high, which I was told we should have to climb. But a track had been cut in one almost continuous zigzag straight up its face, and, the next day, within little more than an hour after we began to climb, we found ourselves upon the crest, with the river we had crossed at the start gleaming like a thread of silver in the valley below.

As far as my memory of the old caravan route beyond Shiraz to the Persian Gulf serves me, not a single point of the Lynch road could compare for difficulty with the great *kotals*, over which the toughest mules groan and stumble down to Bushire, whilst in addition to greater immunity from accidents, the Lynch road has the further advantage of shortness. The land carriage from Ahwaz to Isfahan is only 277 miles, as against 530 miles from Bushire to Isfahan. Hence, in spite of the intense conservatism of the Persian muleteer, who, it must be remembered, practically controls the carrying trade of the country, the merits of the Lynch road are obtaining gradual recognition, and last year especially marked very distinct progress. The Indian Government is sending forward over the Lynch road a large portion of the materials for the construction of the new direct telegraph line from Kashan through Yezd and Kerman to Baluchistan, and the results have so far been most satisfactory, as besides a saving of over 30 per cent. on the cost of freight from the Persian Gulf to Isfahan as compared with the Bushire route, there has been a still greater saving of time. Consignments have been landed by the same steamer at Bushire and at Muhammerah respectively for conveyance to Isfahan, and the goods sent up the Karun and over the Bakhtiari road have been delivered at Isfahan before those sent up direct from Bushire have even reached Shiraz, which is

barely half-way to Isfahan. The native merchants of Isfahan are also beginning to appreciate these advantages for their most valuable exports, such as opium, and for 1902 the traffic over the Lynch road amounted to 5,136 loads, as against 2,620 in 1901.

CHAPTER XIV

THE HIGHLAND TRIBESMEN OF PERSIA

IF for the ordinary traveller the chief attraction of the Bakhtiari route lies in the natural grandeur of the country, it offers to the political student the additional advantage of bringing him into contact with one of the most interesting races that inhabit Persia. The warlike and hardy nomads who dwell in these mountain fastnesses have indeed little in common with the degenerate townsman or down-trodden villager of Persia proper. Not much is known as to the origin of the Bakhtiaris, but the opinion first, I believe, expressed by Layard, that "they are of pure Iranian blood, the descendants of the tribes which inhabited the mountains they still occupy from the remotest antiquity," is now generally accepted. Their virtues and their vices, their manners and their customs, are, at any rate, those of free men. A fierce light plays in their jet-black eyes, and constant exposure to sun and wind has tanned their skin almost as black as the raven ringlets that curl over their ears. Muscular and active like all highlanders, they are also, unlike most highlanders, splendid horsemen, for though essentially men of the hills, they are also men of the plains. They have ceased to be merely pastoral nomads, and though they still derive their chief means of livelihood from their herds and flocks, they no longer disdain

to till the soil, whether on the upland slopes, where they spend the summer months, or on the fertile plains of Arabistan, to which they descend on the approach of winter.

When I travelled through the Bakhtiari country, it was the season for their annual migration from the highlands to the lowlands, and from time to time we would overtake a long stream of men and women and children with their flocks and droves winding slowly up and down the narrow mountain track, lambs and kids and babies and chickens and hens tied promiscuously, with the rest of the tribal goods and chattels, on to the backs of the nimble little donkeys and diminutive cows, which serve as beasts of burden. Many of the men, and a few of the women, rode horses or mules, but the majority were on foot. Grimy and sunburnt, and often ragged, their proud bearing and elastic step stamped them as the lords of the soil they trod, and the rifle or musket, which even the goat-herd tending his flock down the mountain side wore jauntily slung across his back, was only the outward and visible emblem of the martial spirit transmitted from father to son through generations of fighting ancestors. Nominally Mussulmans as they are nominally Persian subjects, their allegiance to both the Koran and the Shah sits lightly upon them. "No true Bakhtiari," it used to be said, "dies in his bed," and in defiance of all Mussulman prejudice and usage, a rough-hewn lion of a conventionally uncouth type, adorned with a sabre and a pistol, marks in every ancient graveyard the resting-place of the warrior. As for temporal authority, the ordinary Bakhtiari, at any rate, looks no further than the head of his tribe. Courteous and hospitable to strangers in so far as they enjoy the protection of his

A BAKHTIARI GRAVEYARD

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chiefs, his powers of discrimination between *meum* and *tuum* appear to be rudimentary, and the predatory instinct is still strong within him. Yet to his own code of honour, even in the matter of property, he is faithful enough. Every autumn, before leaving the highland valleys in which he spends the summer, he scatters the seed which the winter rains and snows will fertilise, and marks the extent of his temporary holding with a pattern of stones which no other tribesman will venture to disturb before the sower returns in the spring to gather in his harvest. Light-hearted and cheerful in spite of the severe struggle which he is constantly waging for sheer existence, the Bakhtiari is, however, prompt to wrath, and out of some hasty and insignificant quarrel blood feuds arise which involve whole families and clans in destructive enmity.

It is mainly owing to the frequency and bitterness of such feuds, especially amongst the leading members of the ruling clans, that the Persian Government is able to maintain some semblance of authority over the Bakhtiaris. At times their independence has been well-nigh absolute; they have even more than once threatened to overthrow the power of the Shah; on one occasion they actually placed a puppet of their own on the throne at Isfahan. But, in the long run, the superior diplomacy of the rulers of Persia, coupled with unparalleled treachery, has always asserted itself, and it has always, it must be confessed, found willing and efficient tools amongst the Bakhtiaris themselves. As one of the chiefs remarked sixty years ago to Layard, after Muhammed Taki Khan had been betrayed into the cruel hands of the Motemed-ed-Dowleh, "I will tell you the truth, Sahib. We Bakhtiaris are all fools. So long as we are powerful and strong, and do not fear the

Persians, we must needs be at enmity amongst ourselves and seek each others' lives. Were we but united, these mountains would never be trodden by those dogs of Turks"—the ruling dynasty in Persia is of Turkestan origin—"for they are women, not men." Some of the ablest Persian rulers of the past have realised that a great warlike tribe, such as the Bakhtiaris, if properly handled, might be a bulwark of strength for their Empire. The present dynasty is incapable of such statesmanlike conceptions, and none has practised greater perfidy and cruelty in its dealings with the tribes, or played with greater skill upon their internal jealousies and dissensions. At Kahv-i-Rukh, his summer residence, on a well-watered plateau high up in the mountains, I was the guest of the Serdar Isfendiar Khan, the head of the Haft Lang clan and supreme chief or Ilkhani of the Bakhtiari tribes, a grave and rather sad-looking man of fifty-two, whose father was treacherously murdered by the Zill-es-Sultan under orders from Teheran. Isfendiar himself was spared, but for six years afterwards he remained a state prisoner. When the Zill fell into disgrace with the late Shah in 1888 it suited Teheran to affect disapproval of his policy towards the Bakhtiaris, and Isfendiar Khan was at least outwardly restored to favour, first as Ilbegi and then as Ilkhani of the tribes. The Bakhtiaris who owned allegiance to him numbered, according to his estimate, upwards of 250,000 souls, capable of placing 70,000 fighting men in the field, and, as the Arab tribes of the lowlands were subject to his influence, and Sheikh Khazzal of Muhammerah, who controls the great Kaab clan in the estuary of the Shatt-el-Arab, was his very good friend, his authority could be said to extend from the western borders of the provinces of Isfahan and

Fars to the frontiers of Turkish Arabia. To his own people his word was law, and nothing perhaps afforded a better illustration of the implicit obedience he commanded than the acquiescence of the tribes in the prohibition he had recently enacted of the use of tea and sugar, the excessive consumption of these Persian luxuries being in his opinion a needless extravagance and tending towards Persian effeminacy. Yet, great as his power was over the tribesmen, the history of his family, as well as his own experience, was there to teach him how manifold are the dangers that beset such as him, both from the wiles of the Persians and from the jealousy of his own kinsmen. A few days after my visit to Kahv-i-Rukh I passed through Kalaat Tul, where the great grandson of Muhammed Taki Khan still lives in the castle which his great ancestor built when he raised the Chahr Lang clan to the premiership of the Bakhtiari tribes, but the stronghold in which he entertained Layard is dismantled and ruinous, and his descendants can barely eke out a penurious existence from the remnants of his great estates. Though the fortunes of the Haft Lang were built up on the ruins of the Chahr Lang, the Ilkhani could not but realise that the power of the Bakhtiaris had never recovered from the blow dealt to it when Muhammed Taki was carried off a prisoner to Teheran; and that even in his own branch of the clan the dissensions which brought about the downfall of so many of his predecessors are only slumbering, and may be quickened at any moment under the sinister influence of Persian intrigues. Isfendiar Khan was ill when I saw him, and he died in June, 1903. What will be the consequences of his death to his own people it is yet too early to say, but it cannot fail to increase the apprehensions

which already existed amongst them of troublous times to come.

Almost from the first days when our influence began to make itself felt in Persia the Bakhtiaris have looked instinctively to England for protection, and we have generally sought to cultivate friendly relations with them, so far as we could do so without arousing the susceptibilities of the Central Government. It was mainly to secure our goodwill that the Bakhtiari chiefs agreed to construct and protect a caravan route through their mountains. They are in many respects more open to progressive ideas than the average Persian official, and they value not only the direct profit they themselves derive from the road in the shape of tolls, but also the indirect benefits it has conferred upon their people. For with the growth of traffic cultivation has extended along the road in a very remarkable degree, and the tribesmen are beginning to find a ready market for produce which they had never before dreamt of raising. It is much to be regretted that in these circumstances a misunderstanding should have arisen between the chiefs and Messrs. Lynch as to payment for the construction of the road. The expenditure incurred by Messrs. Lynch—and it must be remembered that they agreed to construct the road merely as agents for the chiefs without making a farthing of profit for themselves—has unfortunately considerably exceeded the original estimates, chiefly owing to the unexpected cost of the two suspension bridges; but the chiefs refuse to consider themselves bound to anything beyond the estimates, and, so far, though they have levied the tolls, they have paid neither capital nor interest, as Messrs. Lynch naturally decline to give them a full discharge against payment of only part of the expenditure they

have actually incurred. Yet the tolls represent a handsome income on the small cost of the road, which amounted only to about £8,500. In 1902 the tolls levied by the chiefs on the through traffic amounted to nearly £500, and the tolls they levy upon local traffic from their own tribesmen must have amounted to a much more considerable sum, as in 1901 they were farmed out for over £1,500. But the Bakhtiari chiefs would probably have been less reluctant to discharge their obligations if the primary object for which they agreed to open up the mountains they had hitherto so jealously guarded against all comers had not been disappointed. Rightly or wrongly, they imagine that, far from having secured thereby the goodwill of the British Legation to whose urgency they yielded, they can no longer rely upon its friendly offices even to the same limited extent as in the past. It is not only that from recent personal incidents, of which they perhaps exaggerate the importance, they have gathered the impression that they are looked upon now as somewhat compromising clients to whom we can no longer afford to lend our patronage. Being shrewd observers, they note and draw their own conclusions from the singular phenomenon that in proportion as the Teheran Government is becoming a mere tool in the hands of Russia, our readiness to strengthen it by favouring its centralising policy at home seems to increase. At any time during the last century we might have paralysed the power of the Central Government in Southern Persia by encouraging the various elements of disaffection which have ever yielded reluctant allegiance to Teheran. We preferred to adopt an opposite policy, and on more than one occasion we actually encouraged, not only the consolidation, but the extension of Persian rule, in the

belief that a strong Persia would also be a friendly Persia. Even the significant developments of the last few years do not appear to have cured us of that delusion, and we still seem disposed to countenance the policy of centralisation by which her rulers look to regain at home some of the prestige they have lost abroad. That Russia should encourage such a policy is natural enough, and she is only doing in Persia what she does in China and in Turkey. So long as the Central Government is sufficiently subservient to her purpose she is quite willing to let it have a free hand in all non-essentials, especially in matters of internal administration.

That Russia is herself beginning to take an active interest in the affairs of the Bakhtiaris is by no means calculated to reassure them. There have been mysterious comings and goings of Russian Consuls and Russian officers in the Bakhtiari mountains, and not only have the demands of Teheran for "benevolences" from the Bakhtiari chiefs grown more exacting, but already last year rumour was rife that the Persian Government meant to take an early opportunity of removing the Ilkhani, who had always openly professed himself a friend of the English, and who built roads for the benefit of their trade. That Russian influence should become a factor in the tribal politics of the Bakhtiaris is an entirely novel feature in the situation. In their traditional detestation of Persian rule, the Bakhtiaris have been accustomed hitherto to place their hopes in the ultimate support of England, because Englishmen are the only foreigners who have cultivated friendly relations with them. But they would very soon learn to turn their eyes towards Russia if her ascendency were once brought home to them; and

though it may suit Russia to pose for the time being as the champion of the Shah's authority, she is much too shrewd to identify her influence permanently with such a hateful formula, or to allow such a splendid material as the Bakhtiari tribesmen to be wasted and debased by Persian methods. Early in the last century, during the great Napoleonic wars, Persia was induced to commit for a time to British officers the thankless task of reorganising her army. Of the force which they created none was more efficient and loyal to its British commanders than a body of 3,000 Bakhtiaris raised with the consent of the chieftains. In the hands of a born leader of men like General Kosagowsky the Bakhtiaris would furnish an army which would soon secure to Russia all over Southern Persia down to the Gulf the same, and more than the same, ascendency she already enjoys in the North. That a body of 100 Bakhtiari tribesmen under one of their own chiefs has lately been attached to the Cossack Brigade at Teheran is, to say the least, a noteworthy symptom.

From the ridge of the Mungasht, the most southerly of the lofty ranges that enclose the summer haunts of the Bakhtiaris, the mountains fall away in a succession of spacious upland terraces leading down in turn by a series of steep descents to the great alluvial lowlands. From the edge of the last of these terraces, supported by serried buttresses which form a natural retaining wall 600 or 700 feet high, the eye ranges over an apparently boundless plain, stretching away for a hundred miles due south to the head of the Persian Gulf, and south-east across the Karun to the great Mesopotamian delta. In November there is little to break the yellow-and-brown monotony of this vast expanse, save the dark tents of Arab nomads and the wattle huts of

occasional villages clustered round a few wells of more or less brackish water. For in the rare patches of cultivation the summer crops have long since been garnered, and the grass has everywhere been eaten down to the ground by the roaming herds and flocks. Yet it only requires a few days' beneficent rain to convert this plain into a great succulent pasture land, and as the first autumnal storms had just swept up from the Gulf, we found, before we reached Ahwaz, tender shoots of green already bursting forth from the sodden soil under the compelling force of the fierce sunshine, and we met troops of Arabs—men, women, and children—sallying forth from the villages on the banks of the Karun to sow their winter crops and pick out fresh pasturages in their accustomed haunts. A little later in the year the Bakhtiaris descend from their mountains to share the plain with the Arabs, but they had not yet reached the lowlands, and we seemed to have dropped suddenly into a purely Arab country. The harsh guttural tongue, always voluble and strident, the strong Semitic type, even the coif of yellow silk, bound round the head with a twist of black camel-hair wool, showed that, though still nominally in Persia, we had already passed into the land of the Arab, where the untutored son of Ishmael still roams at large, yielding, outside the towns, but scant allegiance to any master, Turk or Persian, from the shores of the Persian Gulf to the outskirts of Damascus and Aleppo.

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CHAPTER XV

THE KARUN TRADE ROUTE

NO one who remembers the flourish of trumpets with which the opening of the Karun river to navigation was announced in 1888 can well repress a smile at the exiguous results which have hitherto attended that effort of British diplomacy. It is not that anything has happened to diminish the value of the Karun, or that those who undertook to act as the pioneers of navigation on its waters have lacked enterprise or perseverance. The fiercer the competition to which British trade is being subjected in Northern Persia under the politico-economic pressure of Russia, the more important it becomes for us to develop the easiest and cheapest means of access to the Persian markets of the interior from the South. The recent formation of a new British company which is to take over the road rights of the Imperial Bank of Persia may be taken as an indication that we are beginning to appreciate the fact that the Karun must be our chief base of operations from the South. It may be hoped that before long a carriage-road from Isfahan to Kashan and Kum, connecting with the Kum-Teheran road which the Imperial Bank constructed a few years ago, will materially facilitate traffic between the Karun and the capital. The material difficulties to be overcome

are certainly not formidable. The "Persian Trading and Transport Company" has also acquired the right to open up a new road from Shuster on the upper Karun through the Dizful valley to Khorumabad and Burujird, connecting thence through Sultanabad with the carriage-road for which the Imperial Bank had also acquired a concession from the Persian Government. On this route the difficulties are likely to be greater, as it will have to be carried through the turbulent country of the Lurs, but there is no reason why the methods which have proved successful with the Bakhtiaris, who are themselves an offshoot of the Lur tribes, should not be equally successful with the nomads of Luristan proper. In any case, the navigation of the Karun will have to receive a little more attention at the hands of British diplomacy than it has had during the greater part of the last fifteen years. So far we seem never to have quite realised that it is one thing to obtain the promulgation of a Persian Firman and another to secure its execution. A brief summary of the difficulties with which British enterprise on the Karun has had to contend possesses from this point of view more than a merely retrospective interest.

Even the most unprogressive of Chinese Mandarins might learn something from Persian Mandarins in the matter of obstruction and bad faith. Within a few weeks of the promulgation of the Firman the Persian Government elaborated a series of regulations concerning the navigation of the Karun, which were obviously intended to defeat as far as possible the objects of the concession. It was ruled that no foreigner could purchase, hold, or mortgage property on the Karun, although the Treaty of Turkman Chai, of which we share the benefits under our most-favoured-nation clause,

gives foreign merchants the right to purchase property sufficient for a dwelling-house, with warehouses and business premises. The Persian Government, on the other hand, declared that it would itself undertake the construction of such buildings, and lease them to foreigners trading on the Karun. It was further enacted that the banks and course of the river were not to be interfered with in any way. These regulations were blandly accepted by the British Minister. The result was that when Messrs. Lynch Brothers, who had already placed their steamers on the river at the invitation of the British Government and on the faith of the Shah's Firman, claimed their right under the Turkman Chai Treaty to purchase land at Ahwaz for the erection of the necessary business premises, they were met with a categorical refusal on the part of the Persian authorities, who took their stand on the "Karun regulations"; and their refusal was upheld by the British Legation. At the same time, having learnt from Messrs. Lynch's agent, under cover of a friendly consultation, what that firm proposed to do in order to promote navigation on the river, the Persian Governor-General of Arabistan hastened to secure from Teheran an exclusive concession in favour of one of his creatures, the Moyun-i-Tujar of Bushire, for the whole of the scheme, which embraced the construction of a wharf and business premises at Ahwaz, the establishment of a portage tramway round the rapids above Ahwaz, and the placing of a special steamer on the upper reach of the river between Ahwaz and Shuster. Thus when Messrs. Lynch, finding themselves deprived of their treaty rights to buy land at Ahwaz, fell back upon the Persian Government's own undertaking to provide the necessary premises, the latter entrenched themselves

behind the concession they had granted to the Moyun. For nearly three years Messrs. Lynch, failing to obtain any redress, tried to negotiate with that individual, whose terms were, however, so exorbitant that an agreement proved impossible, and in the meantime their agent at Ahwaz was charged 500 krans a month (at the then rate of exchange about £150 per annum) for the rent of an old mat-shed which the Persian authorities had graciously assigned to him as his residence and business premises. It was not until 1894 that the Persian Government were induced to appoint an agent empowered to carry out their engagements, and a lease signed for the premises which Messrs. Lynch now occupy. Even this lease, however, can hardly be said to give them either fixity of tenure or immunity from vexation, for already the Persians, who drafted it themselves, have endeavoured to place upon it their own arbitrary interpretation. As for the tramway round the rapids between the lower and upper reaches of the river, the Moyun has made good his monopoly, and the only safeguard against absolutely prohibitive charges for the portage of goods is the competition of mule carriage, which the Persian authorities have tried, hitherto unsuccessfully, to defeat by intimidating the muleteers. The navigation of the Upper Karun between Ahwaz and Shuster is carried on under conditions even more characteristically Persian. Messrs. Lynch had to present the Shah with a steamer and then to run it on his account. One might imagine that, navigation having been placed under such exalted auspices, there would have been less obstruction. On the contrary. Up to the present day Messrs. Lynch have failed to secure any kind of premises for storing cargo at Shuster, or even the most elementary facilities

for loading and unloading. Trading under such conditions is bound to be unprofitable, but the Shah's Government bears the loss stoically, for the simple reason that it leaves Messrs. Lynch to meet the deficit. So far it has not paid a single penny towards balancing its account, and has, apparently, no intention of doing so. Anything in the shape of a river conservancy is, of course, unknown in Persia, and the clause of the "Karun regulations" providing against interference with the shores or the course of the river serves no other purpose than to prevent the removal, however urgent, of natural obstructions to navigation. In fact, the only clause of the "Karun regulations" which the Persians have honestly observed is that which authorises them to raise a due of one kran on every ton of cargo carried.

But mere obstruction for obstruction's sake, though it may have its fascination, is not the game which appeals most to the Persian official. There are other forms which possess the more substantial attraction of bringing grist to his own mill. The plains watered by the Karun are capable of becoming one of the granaries of the world. Even under their present rulers they yield a bountiful harvest whenever there is an abundant rainfall, and the export of wheat in good seasons was an important feature in the estimates of future traffic on the river. These estimates the Persian authorities have done their best to upset by the simple process of enacting arbitrary prohibitions against the exportation of foodstuffs. Persian officials are adepts in the art of engineering corners in grain for their own personal benefit, and, by stopping the export, they practically compel the producer to sell his produce to them on their own terms. It is a lucrative business, in which

the Shah's Ministers in Teheran do not scruple to take a hand, and there is always a famine in some part of the empire which can serve as a colourable pretext for the prohibition, though, in the present state of communications and with the present cost of transport, an embargo on the exportation of grain from Muhammerah can no more relieve a famine in Khorasan, or even in Isfahan, than in Timbuktu.

The following incident may serve as an illustration. In June, 1900, there came as a pleasant surprise to the British merchants at Muhammerah, who had grown weary of making fruitless representations, an official notification from the British Legation at Teheran that the Persian Government had removed the embargo on the exportation of wheat from the ports of Southern Persia. They thereupon proceeded to purchase grain from the natives up the Karun, who were immediately thrashed for their pains by the local authorities at Ahwaz. This was reported to Teheran, and inquiry made as to the apparent exclusion of Muhammerah from the removal of the embargo. The answer promptly came that Muhammerah was not excluded, and that within ten days categorical orders would be received by all the local officials which would avert further difficulties. On the faith of this definite statement purchases of grain were executed on a larger scale, and heavy payments made on account. But week after week elapsed, no orders were received, and the local officials refused to allow the grain purchased from the peasantry to be removed. At the end of August the Legation had to admit that a hitch had occurred, and intimated that the best way to secure a settlement would probably be for the interested parties to negotiate direct with the Governor-General of Arabistan, who

was the chief obstructionist, and, in the absence of the Shah then in Europe, refused, it was alleged, to comply with the orders sent to him from Teheran. This suggestion was utterly impracticable, for the Governor-General of Arabistan resided at Burujird, about a fortnight's journey from Shuster, and communications in that part of the country are always notoriously precarious and unsafe. Meanwhile the local authorities, who refused to allow the British purchaser to remove the grain, were actually pressing him on behalf of the producer to complete payment of the purchase-money. In these circumstances the only course left to the purchaser was to try and get rid of his grain as best he could in the local market. Besides this, he had to cancel all arrangements made for transport, freight, etc. When this was done, and the Governor-General of Arabistan and his friends in Teheran had been in due course apprised by their local agents of the successful termination of the "squeeze," the comedy was completed by an official communication from the Persian Government to H.M. Legation, stating that as far as purchases had been already made by British merchants, imperative orders had now been sent to allow the produce to be exported, and the Legation was able to announce with no little self-complacency that its untiring efforts had at last been rewarded. The unconscious humour of this announcement was doubtless not lost upon the interested parties in Muhammerah, who had had to write off their losses before the announcement reached them.

It says a good deal for British pluck that it should have held out on the Karun for so many years in the face of such discouraging conditions, for the small annual compensation for loss which was granted by

the British and Indian Governments to encourage Messrs. Lynch to continue their pioneer work has failed, I understand, to cover even the deficit on the navigation of the river between Muhammerah and Ahwaz, not to speak of the debt contracted towards them by the Shah's Government in connection with the navigation of the upper reach between Ahwaz and Shuster. Though at an entirely disproportionate cost of both money and energy, steady progress has, nevertheless, been made. The foreign trade of the Karun, which was estimated at barely £16,000 in 1891, represented in 1902 a total value of £271,732, in spite of severe temporary depression due to bad harvests and other adverse influences; and the foreign shipping of the port of Muhammerah has increased within the same period from 135,000 to over 240,000 tons, whereof 95 per cent. is British. The population of Muhammerah has grown from about 2,500 to over 7,000, and at Ahwaz an entirely new settlement has sprung up called Bunder Nasri, just below the rapids, at the terminus of river navigation on the lower reach. These are, no doubt, small beginnings, but if one takes into account the enormous difficulties to be contended with, they are far from discouraging. Yet, at the very moment when a fresh impetus was being given to the Karun trade by the prospect of improved means of communication with the inland markets, the Persian Government threatened to deal it a fresh and very serious blow.

By a stroke of the pen and without a word of warning the new Belgian administration of the Persian Customs attempted in the autumn of 1902 to revolutionise the whole Customs system of the Karun district. After the river was opened to navigation in 1888 the collection of Customs dues was consolidated at three different

stations—Muhammerah, Ahwaz, and Shuster. Goods could thus be despatched on through bills of lading to or from any one of these three ports, where the import or export dues, as the case might be, were respectively paid. Native merchants at Shuster and Ahwaz attach special value to this arrangement, which was almost the only practical concession ever made by the Persian authorities to the trading interests of the Karun. In 1890, when Messrs. Lynch came to an agreement with the Shah's Government for running the steamer, which they presented to his Majesty, on the upper reach of the river, they were careful to include the maintenance of the three Customs stations as one of the conditions of that agreement, and the pledge then given by the Amin-es-Sultaneh, now the Atabeg-Azam, who was then Prime Minister, was embodied in an official memorandum drawn up by Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, under date of February 14th, 1890. The action of the new Belgian administration of Customs, therefore, not only interfered abruptly with established usage, but was a deliberate violation of specific engagements contracted by the Persian Government. No official intimation of any kind was given that such action was contemplated. The Customs stations at Shuster and Ahwaz were closed, and goods consigned to those ports were detained arbitrarily in Muhammerah pending payment of import duties at that port, where the carriers had, of course, no authority to pay them, and where neither the shippers nor the consignees had in most cases any agents. In the same way goods despatched from those ports on through bills of lading were detained at Muhammerah because there was no longer anyone qualified to receive payment of the export dues tendered to the Persian authori-

ties at the place of origin, and there was no one who could pay them at Muhammerah. For more than a month a complete deadlock ensued, and though a *modus vivendi* was established with regard to the goods actually detained in transit, very strong pressure had to be applied to secure the material interests of the Karun trade permanently against the arbitrary action of the new Customs administration.

But the issue was not merely a commercial one. For at Muhammerah, as in all the Persian ports of the Gulf, the establishment of the new Customs administration is regarded as forming part of a comprehensive policy of centralisation upon which Teheran has entered at the instigation of Russia. Hitherto the Customs administration had been left practically in the hands of the local authorities, who levied them or farmed them out on their own account, often making merely such periodical remittances to the Shah's Treasury as were necessary to avoid acute trouble with the central Government. This system led, no doubt, to grave abuses, the tax-farmer of one port not infrequently competing with his neighbours at the expense of the Treasury by offering importers a largely reduced tariff. The looser the administrative ties which bound the local authorities to the central Government the larger was the liberty or licence they enjoyed with regard to the Customs. In Muhammerah especially the authority wielded by Sheikh Khazzal, who controls the great Kaab tribes of the Karun and the Shatt-el-Arab, has been rather that of a semi-independent vassal than of a mere governor appointed by the Shah. The introduction of a highly centralised administration directly controlled from Teheran and charged with an important branch of revenue collection necessarily constitutes in

THE RESIDENCE OF SHEIKH KHAZZAL ON THE TIGRIS

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his eyes, and in the eyes of the natives generally, a serious inroad upon his authority; and, indeed, he seemed at first by no means inclined to submit to it tamely. The Arabs of South-Western Persia, like the Bakhtiaris, have always looked to British influence as a counterpoise to the centralising tendencies of Teheran, and no one, perhaps, has courted British friendship more assiduously than Sheikh Khazzal, who is just about old enough to have seen with his own eyes British gunboats steaming up the Karun and Indian sepoys in occupation of Muhammerah and Ahwaz during the Persian expedition of 1857. Had he received the slightest encouragement from us, the new Belgian administration would assuredly have had some difficulty in securing recognition at his hands, as the coercion of an Arab chief who controls powerful tribes in a country prone to lawlessness is a task upon which Teheran would not have been likely to enter lightly, especially when that chief, having wedded a Persian princess, has made friends unto himself at Court. If, moreover, he was aware that the establishment of a Belgian administration of the Customs, not only at Muhammerah, but at all the Gulf ports, might well be regarded as a violation of the engagement into which the Persian Government had entered not to place the Customs of Southern Persian under foreign superintendence, he was, perhaps, entitled to expect our support. Our only reply, however, was that he had better come to an amicable arrangement with the Belgians. This he has done, and the arrangement is not pecuniarily disadvantageous to him; but whether our advice was palatable is another question. The conclusions he has drawn from it are certainly not flattering to those who gave it. Whereas formerly no foreign influence of any kind except that

of England was visible in Southern Persia, the administration which most directly affects even our commercial interests has been delivered up to be controlled by a foreign influence which not only is not English, but is practically, if not avowedly, anti-English. That England should have tolerated such an innovation if she were able to prevent it is inconceivable to the native mind. That the reorganisation of the Customs is an internal reform within the rights of the Persian Government, and that the choice of Belgian officials to carry it out has been prompted by the desire to avoid provoking international jealousies, are official arguments which equally fail to impress the native. He takes stock only of what are to him the bed-rock facts, that Persia has pledged her Customs revenues to Russia and that the Belgians are merely acting as revenue collectors on behalf of Russia. If he is told that the Customs revenues of the Persian Gulf have been specially excluded from the bond he is apt to smile, or to inquire pointedly why Russia insisted that Persia should at once repay out of the Russian loans the debt which a few years ago assigned the customs of the Persian Gulf as security to England (*i.e.* to the Imperial Bank of Persia). He knows, too, that such a vigorous measure of centralisation as the reorganisation of the Customs under the direct control of Teheran is one from which the nerveless hands of his rulers would have flinched had they not been braced up to it by strong pressure from outside. *Fecit cui prodest;* so the establishment of a new administration as antagonistic as the Belgian Customs have shown themselves to be, at least in the South, to the interests of British trade is, not perhaps unreasonably, looked upon as one of the many signs of the times; like the creation of Russian

Consulates — including a new Russian Consulate-General at Ahwaz, where Russian interests are at present absolutely *nil* — the journeyings of Russian agents, the cruises of Russian men-of-war, the ventures of Russian trading vessels, which, in the Persian Gulf as elsewhere, all point to the new star of ascendency rising in the North.

CHAPTER XVI

TURKISH ARABISTAN

IN spite of the frontiers which politically divide Persian from Turkish Arabistan—frontiers of which Turkey, at any rate, does her best to bring home the reality to all concerned by the most absurd and onerous quarantine regulations—the great alluvial plains which stretch from the Bakhtiari mountains across the Karun, the Tigris, and the Euphrates towards the Arabian peninsula form physically and ethnically so homogeneous a whole that the present artificial lines of severance cannot be expected to outlive the precarious tenure upon which their titular owners still hold them. The disappearance of the two decadent Oriental Monarchies that have so long misgoverned one of the most fertile tracts of land in the whole world must be but a question of time. The Turk and the Persian are both aliens in the land, equally hated by the Arab population, and both have proved equally unworthy and incompetent stewards of a splendid estate, though Turkish administration in these distant provinces, far removed, on the one hand, from the blighting influence of Constantinople and fairly accessible, on the other, to the restraining influence of British gunboats, compares in many ways favourably with Persian administration. There is little or no probability of the

Arabs developing any of the qualities which entitle or enable a people to govern themselves, and, with the pressure which is now driving civilised nations to grasp in every direction at new opportunities of remunerative expansion, it is equally improbable that one of the historic granaries of the world, which, moreover, lies athwart a main artery of communication between Europe and the East, will be allowed indefinitely to lie all but fallow in the hands of its present thriftless possessors.

More than half a century ago there was a time when we seemed ready to realise the importance of this region. With no natural boundaries to landward, until one reaches the great mountain system which stretches across Southern Persia from the borders of Afghanistan to the highlands of Kurdistan, and easily accessible from the sea by extensive inland waterways, the basin of the Tigris and the Euphrates offered every inducement to the enterprise of a nation commanding the seas and already holding a dominant position in Southern Asia. The British Resident at Baghdad in the days of Taylor and Rawlinson was the most powerful personage in the country, and a determined and consistent effort on our part might have restored the ancient prosperity of Mesopotamia for the benefit of our Indian Empire and of ourselves as well as of Turkey. But the national interest which was then taken in such enterprises as the Chesney expedition on the Euphrates was excited mainly by the prospect of opening up a through route to India for which the time was perhaps not yet ripe, and relatively little account was taken of the value of these regions in themselves, either as an outlet for our commerce or as a field of emigration for the surplus millions of our

Indian population. Yet though we lacked the foresight to seize at the flood the tide which has long since ebbed, the interests we still possess are much too important to be allowed to drift helplessly at the mercy of impending changes which it probably no longer lies with us to avert.

In 1878 the British Resident at Baghdad wrote:—

"I feel I cannot too strongly urge the subject on the attention of the Government, as I am sure in my own mind that there are influences at work which will some day lose us the privilege we may honestly and fairly claim at the hands of the Turkish Government for the fostering care we have taken of its trade by our having been for fifty-eight years the conservators of the public peace in the Persian Gulf, by our surveys of its shores, a work accomplished by the officers of the late Indian Navy at great trouble, expense, and sacrifice of life, and the general relations we have had with all the Arab tribes on the Persian Gulf littoral."

The warning then given might be repeated to-day with added emphasis. Not only is Russian influence moving steadily down from the North, but a new world-power has appeared on the scene in the shape of Germany, who has taken in hand, with characteristic vigour and tenacity, the great railway scheme from which we flinched when we had exclusive command of the field. Whatever the relative value of railways and waterways for commercial purposes, it is too late for us to aspire to any exclusive command of railway enterprise in these regions, for we have now to reckon in any case with Germany. Had we simply built a railway years ago from Basra to Baghdad, instead of talking for decades about a trunk line from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf, we should have been in a position to impose our

own terms upon her, and our commercial interests would not have been dependent upon the advantages which, as a pre-eminently maritime nation, we derive, or might derive, from water communications. But we did not do so, and, what is more, we have done little or nothing to develop or improve even the water communications. Yet, as things are at present, if we are to hold our own against the competition of land-borne trade whenever the German railway is completed to Baghdad and the Persian Gulf, unless we can still secure the control of the latter section, our main hope lies in increasing, as far as possible, the facilities for our water-borne traffic.

It is easy enough, no doubt, to talk at large about the cheapness of water-borne traffic all the world over as compared with land-borne traffic. But these generalisations do not apply to water-borne traffic carried on under the difficulties and restrictions it has to contend with in this part of the Turkish dominions. The navigation of such tortuous and wayward rivers as the Shatt-el-Arab and the Tigris is not in itself easy, and the Turks, of course, do nothing to make it easier. River conservancy is as unknown in Turkey as in Persia. The course of these streams is not only shallow and winding, but subject to heavy rises and falls, and constantly changing with the formation and disappearance of rapidly shifting sand shoals. The river journey from Basra to Baghdad is about 500 miles, and takes four to five days by steamer under favourable conditions. The distance by land is only 300 miles. Moreover, Basra lies 60 miles up the Shatt-el-Arab, and at its mouth there is a bar with barely 10 feet of water at low tide, and even at high water vessels drawing more than 16 to 18 feet of water have to dis-

charge a portion of their cargo in lighters—always an expensive operation—before attempting to enter the river. The approaches to the river from the gulf are complicated and treacherous; not a single light or beacon has Turkey placed at any point of the coast, and the only buoys that mark the channels are those laid down by the British India Steam Navigation Company, just as the only surveys are those made by the British Navy and the Indian Marine. On the other hand, Turkey has erected forts at Fao, on the Shatt-el-Arab, about half-way between the bar and the confluence of the Karun, in direct violation of her treaty engagements with Persia, and if she has not yet armed them, this is solely due to the vigorous protests which the British Government has from time to time entered at Constantinople and which, as the Turks know, could be easily enforced on the spot.

But great as are the natural difficulties with which water-borne traffic is handicapped, they do not form so serious an obstacle to trade as the arbitrary restrictions placed upon it by the shortsightedness or wilful obstruction of the Turkish authorities. The Euphrates is practically closed over its whole course to foreign vessels, as is also the Tigris above Baghdad. Messrs. Lynch Brothers, who have navigated the Lower Tigris for half a century, are only allowed to employ two steamers in the trade between Basra and Baghdad, and to keep a third one laid up at Basra in reserve against accidents. A Turkish company also runs four steamers on the same line, and two more, which were ordered in England in 1902 on behalf of influential personages at Yildiz who enjoy the favour of the Sultan, have recently begun to ply for traffic. After much solicitation the Turkish Government now allows the Lynch

steamers to take lighters in tow for the conveyance of surplus cargo, but this paltry concession entirely fails to meet the requirements of the trade, and is actually granted only as a temporary favour to relieve the present congestion. Local shipments have often to be refused altogether and the shipments from India and Great Britain strictly limited. Nevertheless the accumulations of cargo on through shipments for forward delivery are so great that it would take nearly three months to clear off the stock piled up on the wharves at Basra, even if there were no fresh arrivals in the meantime. Freight in these circumstances is naturally very high, and it actually costs much more to forward goods from Basra to Baghdad than to bring them out from London to Basra. The heavy disabilities under which trade is thus placed do not affect our commercial interests only locally. A considerable portion of our trade with Persia—to an annual amount estimated at nearly three-quarters of a million sterling—is done through Basra and Baghdad by the caravan route to Kermanshah, Hamadan, and Teheran. This route is indeed considered by many to be the most promising route for British trade into Northern Persia, but what prospect is there of developing traffic which is thus strangled at the neck? Exploring operations were commenced last year near Khanikin, just over the Turko-Persian frontier, under the D'Arcy concession for opening up the naphtha wells of Southern Persia, and one of the great difficulties with which the work had to contend was the artificial congestion of traffic, under this system of obstruction, on the route over which all the machinery, etc., had to be imported. In these circumstances it is not surprising that, as the boring to a level of 2,000 feet below the surface did not show very satisfactory

results, and doubts had arisen as to the actual ownership of the soil, the boundaries of Turkey and Persia at that point never having been definitely delimitated, the concessionnaires have preferred to remove the seat of their operations to the Karun valley.

The restrictions placed by the stupidity and ill-will of the Turkish authorities upon international trade are so glaring and so obviously directed against British trade that it should not be beyond the power of the British Government to insist upon their removal. The Porte is so little amenable to arguments based even on the economic interests of Turkey herself that it is not likely, I admit, to grant, of its own accord, complete freedom of navigation on these waters; but when the Turks call upon us to consent to a revision of our commercial treaties, and an increase of duties on British imports, we are surely entitled to demand, in this direction also, some compensatory concession for the benefit of our own trade. It is even doubtful whether the restrictions which Turkey at present places upon the navigation of the Tigris and the Euphrates are not at variance with her existing engagements. Though the British Government never appear to have pressed that point, it is worth noting that one of the ablest representatives they have had at Baghdad, who had made a special study of the question, contended only twenty-five years ago that the Capitulations of 1661 might be successfully invoked, as Article I., which has been confirmed by successive treaties to the present day, lays down "that the English nation and merchants and all other merchants sailing under the English flag, with their ships and vessels and merchandise of all descriptions, shall and may pass safely by sea, and go and come into our dominions without any

the least prejudice or molestation." He held, therefore, that it was in conformity with the above principle that, in 1834, the Sultan's Firman was issued, authorising four British steamers to navigate the Euphrates, and it is under this Firman, originally granted for the Euphrates, that by a series of diplomatic evolutions the Indian Marine retains a gunboat, the *Comet*, at Baghdad, and Messrs. Lynch ply their steamers on the Lower Tigris and the Shatt-el-Arab.

Since the last of our Euphrates steamers was withdrawn in 1843 for service on the Indus little definite information has been available with regard to the possibilities of navigating the Euphrates. Large swamps have formed above its confluence with the Tigris, and they absorb now a considerable portion of its waters. But as the Turks are known to have run a small steamer up as far as Meskene, there is no reason to believe that the task of restoring a regular channel for navigation by light-draught steamers would prove either very arduous or costly. On the Upper Tigris a small Turkish steamer has plied occasionally between Baghdad and Mosul, and the natural obstacles to navigation might probably be removed up to Diarbekir. If these two great rivers were thrown open without any arbitrary restrictions to the mercantile enterprise of the world—for we need not seek here, any more than we have done on the Karun, for any exclusive privileges—we should be in a much better position to meet the competition of any future railways from Asia Minor into Mesopotamia, not only in Basra and Baghdad, but in many other markets accessible from their upper reaches. It is hopeless to expect that the Turkish Government will ever undertake the irrigation works which alone are necessary to give a fresh meaning

to the tradition that the Garden of Eden was located between the Tigris and the Euphrates, but Sir William Willcocks, of Egyptian irrigation fame, has lately drawn attention to the field which lies before us there within easy reach of India with its superabundant population and its great experience of similar undertakings. British capital and British guidance would give a new stimulus and new opportunities to the industry of the people—at present quite as effectually discouraged by the difficulty of disposing of surplus produce as by the exactions of the tax-collector—and our water-borne trade with adequate facilities for expansion would take its legitimate share of the returning prosperity of the country.

Surely, at the present day, when British industry is clamouring for new markets under the growing pressure of universal competition, it behoves the British Government to make an effort to retain and develop the markets which we have already opened up and where our predominance is still intact. The trade of Basra and Baghdad, artificially cribbed and confined as it is, is by no means insignificant. It is unnecessary to produce detailed statistics of which even the compilers are unable to guarantee the accuracy. But the value of the foreign imports as set forth in the latest Consular reports amounted to over one and a quarter million sterling in 1902, or about the same figure as in 1901, though the exports, in consequence of exceptionally bad harvests, had fallen to £950,000 from £1,150,000 in 1901, and £1,560,000 in 1900. In one respect the foreign trade of the Tigris is on a sounder basis than the foreign trade of the Persian ports of the Gulf, for the exports bear a much more favourable proportion to the imports. The forests of date palms, which form

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so picturesque a feature in the landscape along both banks of the Shatt-el-Arab, contribute, with cereals, the most important item of exportation, the total value of the date crop having reached upwards of £350,000 in a good year; and, shortsighted as is the economic policy of Turkey, her officials are not free like their Persian colleagues to interfere with the export trade by arbitrary embargoes and to engineer rings for their own private benefit. Curiously enough the foreign merchants of Basra confine themselves almost entirely to the export trade, leaving the import trade to native firms, mostly Jewish. Both the imports and the exports are, however, mainly British or British Indian, and British shipping is equally predominant, the net tonnage of British steamers cleared at the port of Basra in 1902 amounting to 164,341 tons out of a total of 201,513 tons. Satisfactory as these results doubtless are, they fall deplorably short of what they might have been had British diplomacy shown a little more foresight in the past, or of what they might be now, if it displayed a little more energy in the present; and the enterprise of a British community which braves the terrors of residence in this fiery furnace, where the thermometer registers over 100° in the shade on 116 days during the year, and the mean temperature night and day for upwards of four months is about 95°, certainly deserves rather more recognition than it has generally met with at the hands of those to whom its interests have been committed. One of the most acute, though not the most serious, grievances of Basra is the arbitrary and futile imposition of quarantine under orders from Constantinople, which is rigorously enforced against all foreigners, though any native can evade it with impunity. Because there is plague in India or cholera in Egypt, every foreigner who has been called on business,

say, to Bushire or some other port on the Persian Gulf, has to perform quarantine either on board ship or in a miserable lazaretto on the opposite bank of the river when he returns to Basra. The native, on the other hand, leaves the ship at Muhammerah, and, subject to a carefully graduated scale of bribery, is allowed almost openly to come across the river in a native boat and land unmolested under the nose of the quarantine authorities. It is humiliating to think that even the British men-of-war engaged in policing the Gulf were fain to submit patiently to the same treatment, until one day a Russian man-of-war came up to Basra, when an emphatic protest from its commander, properly supported by the Embassy at Constantinople, at once secured a substantial reduction of the term. Then and then only did we bestir ourselves, and ultimately succeeded in obtaining a further reduction.

Political and commercial interests, here as elsewhere in the East, are indissolubly bound up together, and the Koweyt question, with which I must deal separately, may serve to illustrate the impossibility of dividing British interests, as some of our political mentors would apparently do, into different water-tight compartments, which can be retained or jettisoned without mutual injury. Basra is the capital of the vilayet specially created to direct and promote the extension of Turkish influence along the shores of the Persian Gulf, and there can be little doubt that, if we had adopted a more determined attitude in defence of our commercial interests against the policy of obstruction steadily pursued by the Porte, Turkey would never have ventured to embark upon the political intrigues by which she is now seeking to undermine our influence in a region where half a century ago our ascendency was unchallenged.

CHAPTER XVII

THE GERMAN RAILWAY INVASION OF ASIATIC TURKEY

GERMANY cannot yet be said to have acquired any positive status in the Middle East. In Persia she has, like other Powers, diplomatic and consular representatives, and in the Persian Gulf her consuls have been displaying of late years a good deal of somewhat ostentatious activity. Her commercial relations with Persia are unimportant, and so far she has had few opportunities of cultivating political relations with the Shah's Government. It may, however, be well to note that in the Treaty of Commerce concluded between Persia and Germany in 1873, which is still in force, it is stated, under Article 19, that "in the event of Persia being involved in differences with another power, the German Imperial Government declares itself ready to employ its good offices, at the invitation of the Shah's Government, with a view to promoting a settlement of such differences." The German Government, we may be sure, reckons among its political assets a provision which opens up such possibilities of "honest brokerage." It is not, however, through Persia, for the present, but through Turkey that Germany is seeking to project her influence into the Middle East. Like all her other schemes of

militant world-policy, this one lacks neither thoroughness nor boldness, and as it must very largely affect our interests and especially those of India, and our co-operation has actually been invited to promote its achievement, it is a matter which it behoves us to examine with much care. Let us, in the first place, consider the circumstances which have enabled Germany to compass with no mean prospect of success such great ambitions.

The growth of German influence at Constantinople is one of the most remarkable political phenomena of the closing years of the nineteenth century. Never has a great European Power acquired so rapidly and with so little apparent effort a position of authority and privilege in a decadent Oriental state with which its previous connections and actual community of interests seemed so slender. Germany stepped, as it were, overnight into the position left vacant on the Bosphorus when, after the fall of the Beaconsfield Government, in 1880, England abruptly changed the course which she had hitherto steered in the Near East. The new German Empire had then entered upon a period of commercial and industrial expansion at home, of which the conquest of new markets abroad was the necessary corollary, and German statesmen were quick to recognise the opportunities which lay before German enterprise in a country where so much goes by favour, and political influence can be so effectually exerted for the furtherance of commercial interests. The first appearance of the Germans on the field was ostensibly in a military capacity, as became the leading military power on the Continent. English and French and other foreign officers had been from time to time employed in Turkey with a view to the reorganisation of the Turkish army and gendarmerie.

But for various reasons, neither they nor their Turkish employers had ever taken their work very seriously, and though some of them, like Valentine Baker and Hobart, had rendered conspicuous services during the Russo-Turkish War, their influence was quite inadequate to overcome the normal apathy and jealousy of the Turk. The German officers who accompanied General von der Goltz, himself an exceptionally distinguished soldier, at once took up a very different position, in which they received the full and unvarying support of their own Government. That they have served the Turkish Government well the event showed when the Turkish army took the field against Greece in 1897. But they have none the less been able to do excellent service to their own country, which has, perhaps, been an even greater gainer by the bargain than Turkey. Armaments, ammunition, stores, equipment, everything that Turkey had to buy abroad, was bought from Germany. And their influence has not been confined to the War Office. The German military instructors have, no doubt, been excellent officers, but they have been even better commercial agents. Their credit at the Palace and with the public departments has been employed, in and out of season, in pushing German trade and promoting German undertakings. The powerful influence of William II. has been exerted with admirable intelligence and perseverance to co-ordinate all the forces that could promote the expansion of German enterprise in Turkey, and the results from the commercial point of view alone, not to speak of the political aspect of the question, have been sufficiently remarkable to deserve attention. The following figures showing the growth of import and export

trade between Germany and Turkey during the last two decades speak for themselves :—

	Exports from Germany into Turkey.		Imports into Germany from Turkey.	
1882.	5,900,000	marks (20 mks. = £1)	1,200,000	marks
1883.	6,700,000	,,	2,200,000	,,
1884.	7,900,000	,,	2,700,000	,,
1885.	7,800,000	,,	3,500,000	,,
1886.	9,000,000	,,	2,100,000	,,
1887.	12,000,000	,,	3,200,000	,,
1888.	11,700,000	,,	2,300,000	,,
1889.	29,800,000	,,	7,000,000	,,
1890.	34,000,000	,,	9,600,000	,,
1891.	37,000,000	,,	13,800,000	,,
1892.	39,700,000	,,	27,900,000	,,
1893.	40,900,000	,,	16,500,000	,,
1894.	34,300,000	,,	18,800,000	,,
1895.	39,000,000	,,	22,000,000	,,
1896.	28,000,000	,,	25,800,000	,,
1897.	30,900,000	,,	30,500,000	,,
1898.	37,100,000	,,	29,500,000	,,
1899.	32,600,000	,,	28,900,000	,,
1900.	34,400,000	,,	30,500,000	,,
1901.	37,500,000	,,	30,100,000	,,
1902.	43,300,000	,,	36,600,000	,,

One of the chief factors in the development of German trade with Turkey has been unquestionably the promotion of railway enterprise in the Ottoman dominions under the auspices of Germany, as the sudden leap in 1889, shown in the above table, clearly indicates. The completion in 1885 of the system known as the "Oriental Railways," commenced by the late Baron Hirsch, placed Germany in direct railway communication through Hungary, Servia, and Bulgaria, with Constantinople. On the opposite shores of the Bosphorus lay a considerable field of undoubted natural

resources, still practically untouched by European enterprise. The only two railway lines of any importance in Asia Minor were the Smyrna-Aïdin Railway, for which a concession had been granted as far back as 1856 to an English company, and the Smyrna-Kassaba Railway, which was then still in the hands of another English company, that had obtained the concession in 1863. No serious attempt had ever been made to open up Asia Minor from the Constantinople base, though a short line of some fifty-six miles had been built by the Turkish Government in 1871, from Haidar Pasha, just beyond Scutari on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus, to Ismid at the head of the bay of the same name in the Sea of Marmora. It had been leased in 1880 for a term of twenty years to an English company, the Turkish Government, however, reserving the right of determining the lease at any moment, subject to compensation. It was to the acquisition of this short line as the base of further operations that the Germans first applied themselves. In 1888 German diplomacy obtained two Imperial Iradés, conveying to the nominee of the Deutsche Bank, the leading financial institution at Berlin, the right of working the Haidar Pasha-Ismidt Railway, and a ninety-nine years concession for an extension of the line to Angora with a kilometric guarantee of 10,300 francs for the original line, and of 15,000 francs for the line yet to be constructed. The capital was raised in Germany for the creation of the "Ottoman Company of Anatolian Railways," the works were pushed on with great energy under a skilled German staff, the materials being, of course, all purchased in Germany, and within four years the line was completed. The German position was now so strong that the real aim of German ambitions could be safely

disclosed. In 1893 another Imperial Iradé granted to the German company two further concessions, one for the construction of a branch line from Eski Shehir to Konia, and another for the extension of the Angora line to Kaisariyeh, with the right to prolong it eventually through Sivas to Diarbekir and down the valley of the Tigris to Baghdad. This second concession was before long abandoned. The ostensible reason was that a careful survey of the country between Angora and Kaisariyeh had shown the difficulties and cost of construction to be prohibitive; the real reason was that the Germans were alarmed at the jealousy already displayed in Russia of their intrusion into the northern part of Asia Minor. The important rights which this concession carried with it, for the extension to Baghdad, appear, however, to have been carefully safeguarded. The Eski Shehir-Konia section was completed in 1896.

The German system had secured a strong foothold in Asia Minor, and tapped some of its richest provinces. The next step was to acquire the control, or to circumscribe permanently the development of the other railway interests in Asiatic Turkey. The Ottoman Government had exercised in 1893 its right to buy back the Smyrna-Kassaba Railway, which had been extended under its English management to Ala Shehir, and it was transferred to a French group which undertook to construct a prolongation to Afium Kara Hissar. At this point it met the Anatolian Railway which passes through Afium Kara Hissar on the way from Eski Shehir to Konia, and if it could only have effected a junction there with the German line, it would unquestionably have deflected much of the latter's traffic from the interior down to Smyrna instead of Constantinople. The German Company refused to allow the junction, and though

such obstruction, however intelligible from the point of view of its own interests, was clearly detrimental to the general interests of trade, the Turkish Government turned a deaf ear to the remonstrances of the French Company, and the two lines remained cut off from each other by a few hundred yards of unmetalled roadway, until the weaker was driven to give in to the stronger. The French Company had to accept the German terms, and though it preserved its nominal identity, it passed practically under the control of the Anatolian Company. Thereupon the Porte immediately reversed its former decision and allowed the junction of the two lines, which it had previously prohibited, to be effected at Afium Kara Hissar. The English Smyrna-Aïdin Company has alone hitherto retained its independence, but German influence at Constantinople has successfully defeated all its efforts to penetrate further into the interior of Asia Minor, though it has never asked for any kind of kilometric guarantee from the Turkish Government, whilst the Anatolian Company does not build a mile of railway without ample cover. The Smyrna-Aïdin Railway with its intelligent system of small lateral feeders may possibly succeed in resisting the pressure of its German neighbours, but the oldest and most business-like railway enterprise in Asia Minor, which with a little more support from the British Government might have been the instrument for opening up the whole country to British trade, is doomed, if not to absorption by its powerful rival, at any rate, to permanent exclusion from any wider field than that upon which it has already conferred an amount of prosperity rare indeed in Turkey. Mention should also be made of the small Mersina-Adana line originally also British, which has been absorbed by the

Anatolian Railway, under an agreement concluded in 1901 with its French proprietors who had taken it over from their English predecessors. At the same time, whilst by a bold and consistent policy the field was being cleared of all competitors in Asia Minor, the Deutsche Bank and its satellites in South Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, were busily engaged in securing a large, if not a preponderating, financial interest in the "Oriental Railways" which control the European traffic between Germany and Constantinople, and in cementing close relations with the Turkish Exchequer by doling out to it from time to time some of those advances of which it stands in chronic need.

Meanwhile quite a voluminous literature had sprung up in the Fatherland discussing from every point of view, commercial and economic, strategic and political, the advantages that were to accrue to Germany from the conquest by railway of the Sultan's Asiatic dominions. The professors foretold the revival of the ancient glories of Nineveh and Babylon under German auspices. The Pan-Germans preached the mobilisation of the "German tribes of Switzerland and of Austria," as well as of the actual German Empire, with a view to the Germanisation of Asia Minor by colonies of German immigrants, some of them even advocating openly the establishment of a formal German protectorate, which should guarantee to the Sultan the preservation of his Asiatic possessions. Military writers expatiated on the strategic value of the proposed railway system, for the protection of which it has been even suggested that Germany should take a leaf out of Russia's book in Manchuria, and establish military posts to secure the works of construction against the unfriendly interference of Kurds and Beduins. The German Emperor,

with his keen imagination and boundless patriotic ambitions, had from the beginning taken the liveliest personal interest in the development of German enterprise in Asia Minor, and in Dr. Siemens, the eminent Director of the Deutsche Bank, he had found an invaluable coadjutor who combined with remarkable business capacity the fervour of an enthusiast. I shall refer later on to the political activity of German diplomacy at Constantinople under the Emperor's direct impulse, and to the visit which his Majesty himself paid to the Sultan in 1898, not disdaining to play for the nonce, if one may use the term without disrespect, the part of an Imperial carpet-bagger. In the year after that memorable visit a Convention was signed between Dr. Siemens and the Porte, which formally conceded in principle to the German Anatolian Company the right to extend from Konia to the Persian Gulf. A commission of German engineers, with the German Consul-General Stemrich at its head, proceeded to survey the ground for the great trunk line, the German Military Attaché at Constantinople was sent to report upon the strategic aspects of the question, and a German cruiser visited the Persian Gulf to discover the most suitable point for a terminus in its waters, whilst Turkey was at the same time prompted to take immediate steps to revive or establish her sovereignty along the littoral. On January 16th, 1902, an Imperial Iradé was issued approving the final Convention, of which the details had been negotiated with the Porte by Dr. Zander, the Director of the Anatolian Railways after the death of Dr. Siemens in 1901. It is unnecessary to enter into the particulars of this Convention, since it served in its turn only as the basis for the elaboration of the definitive scheme with which we are chiefly

concerned. Suffice it to say that the terms were extraordinarily favourable to the German Company, whose concession for the Anatolian railway system already constructed was extended for the full term of the new concession, *i.e.* for ninety-nine years, whilst there were indefinite possibilities of further extension in the very elastic provisions allowing for interruption of the works in case of certain contingencies. In addition to branch lines actually specified, the Convention granted to the German Company a priority of rights with regard to future extensions which practically secured to it the control of all railway enterprise in Asiatic Turkey. The financial conditions, of which the main feature was a kilometric guarantee to be specially secured on certain revenues of the State, were equally favourable to the German Company. They were, at any rate, as satisfactory as any financial arrangements based upon Turkish credit can be.

Thus Germany held in her hand the long-coveted prize. She had acquired the virtual monopoly of railway power in Asiatic Turkey from the Bosphorus to the Persian Gulf, and what railway power in a decadent Oriental state means nowadays, when directed by a strong hand, the Manchurian Railway is there to show, not to speak of Germany's own manipulation of railway power in Shantung. The German Company in whom that power was vested was, it is true, officially termed the "Ottoman" Anatolian Company, but the formula was as empty as that under which the Manchurian Railway is officially designated as the "Eastern Chinese." The process of "peaceful penetration" might not be so easy; but German, like Russian, statesmanship works *à longue échéance*, and from the Elbe to the Euphrates may not be such a far cry in the future as it seems at

present. Putting aside as the dreams of exuberant patriotism the visions of a Germanised Mesopotamia in which not a few ardent spirits indulged, there was enough to justify very sanguine anticipations of commercial and economic ascendency. How comes it, therefore, that instead of preserving and working for her own exclusive benefit the valuable concession acquired under the Convention of 1902, Germany should have seemed anxious to transform it into an international undertaking to be shared with her on a footing of more or less real equality by other powers? The usual explanation is that her financial resources were not sufficient to bear the undivided strain of so heavy an outlay, and that she had no option but to seek the co-operation of foreign capital. This explanation contains part, but, I am inclined to think, only part, of the truth. It was not only her financial, but also her political, credit which she felt to be still inadequate for such a venture on her own account. She owed the concession itself to the extraordinary influence she had acquired over the present ruler of Turkey through an exceptionally fortunate combination of circumstances coupled with consummate diplomacy. Could she feel assured of retaining the same influence throughout the period required for completing the great work of which the concession after all merely conveyed the promise? What were the real foundations of that influence? What guarantee did it afford of permanency? To these queries an answer must be sought in a short retrospective survey of German policy at Constantinople.

Though as late as at the Congress of Berlin in 1878 Bismarck had not yet thought it worth while to go one inch out of his way to conciliate Turkey, the old Chancellor was quick to seize the opportunity which

Turkish resentment of the new policy inaugurated by Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet in 1880 offered to German diplomacy. From that moment, without ever committing herself too deeply, Germany began to play the part of "the friend of Turkey" in the European concert. In the negotiations connected with the rectification of the Turkish frontiers for the benefit of Greece and Montenegro in 1880, and during the complications which followed the Philippoli Revolution in 1885, Bismarck, without ever getting off the international fence, always leant over to the Turkish side, as far as he could prudently do so without compromising the equilibrium of Germany's policy. William II. has merely trodden the same path, with perhaps less discretion. The complimentary missions, the congratulatory telegrams, the presents, the decorations with which he continuously courted the favour of the Sultan, the indifference to the Armenian horrors, of which he set the tone throughout Germany, the sympathy with which he ostentatiously followed the victories of Turkish arms in Greece, were but the preliminaries of a much more significant demonstration. Abdul Hamid was still practically boycotted by public opinion throughout the civilised world when the German Emperor proceeded, with all the pomp in which he revels, to Constantinople and Syria in the autumn of 1898. A potentate who had handed over thousands of his Christian subjects—men, women, and children—in the very streets of his capital to the fury of his Mussulman soldiery could hardly be expected to resist the blandishments of a powerful Christian ruler, who not only consented to accept his hospitality, but proclaimed *urbi et orbi* that "His Majesty the Sultan and the 300,000,000 Mohammedans who, scattered over all

parts of the earth, venerate him as their Kaliph can ever rely upon the friendship of the German Emperor." It is true that neither in connection with Egypt, nor after the Greek war, nor during the crisis in Crete, nor at the time of the French naval demonstration at Mitylene, nor during the recent troubles in the Balkans, has Germany ever made any real stand or risked any unpleasant consequences for the benefit of Turkey. The most she ever ventured to do was to "lay down her flute" when the other powers refused to dance to the Turkish tune she had piped for them in vain in the waters of Crete. But herein lies precisely the Emperor William's diplomatic genius. He realised that even Abdul Hamid's shrewdness is not proof against personal flattery, and without sacrificing a single German interest, and, least of all, without imperilling the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier, he has persuaded that astute potentate of the value and sincerity of a platonic friendship from which Turkey has not yet on a single occasion derived any substantial benefit.

At the same time William II. is doubtless much too intelligent not to realise how precarious are the foundations upon which Germany's position at Constantinople must in these circumstances rest. At any moment there may arise in South-Eastern Europe a situation of such extreme peril for Turkey that the Sultan will be compelled to put Germany's friendship to a crucial test. What the result would have to be if it meant for Germany the slightest departure from her policy of traditional subserviency to her Eastern neighbour, William II. is perfectly well aware. He can only cultivate the friendship of the Sultan so long as it does not seriously impair Germany's

relations with Russia. Of the vigilance and jealousy with which Russia watches the development of German enterprise in Asia Minor a significant indication was given at the beginning of 1900, when, after the conclusion of the preliminary convention for the Baghdad Railway, Russian diplomacy immediately pressed at Constantinople for priority of rights in respect of the construction of railways in the northern part of Asia Minor, and obtained from the Porte an undertaking, known as the "Black Sea basin agreement," that Russia shall enjoy such priority of rights throughout the Asiatic provinces of Turkey that drain into the Black Sea. In the Near East, as in the Far East, Germany can make a brave show so long as she does not cross Russia's path, but, in view of the continental situation in Europe, she cannot afford in the long run to weigh her interests or her ambitions either in Turkey or in China against the danger of a conflict with Russia. Tried by the fiery ordeal of a grave international crisis, Germany's influence at Constantinople could hardly emerge unscathed. But a domestic crisis at Yildiz Kiosk might affect it at least equally prejudicially. So long as Abdul Hamid lives and retains power his will is law, and if he is Germany's friend she can dispense with any other friends in Turkey. It is well for her that this is so, for outside the Palace her friends in Turkey are few indeed. Even in the army, except amongst those who have studied or served in Germany and owe their advancement to German influence, the Germans have inspired more jealousy than love. Amongst the official classes generally and amongst the people, as far as the people count in Turkey, they are hated alike for the good and the bad qualities of the German character, for their intelligence, their pushfulness, their business-like

capacity, their grasping selfishness, and their success. Not the least of the causes which have made them detested by many Turks is that the German Emperor is the Sultan's friend, for though the Turks tremble before their master there are few of them who do not regard him as the worst enemy of his country. Whenever the Hamidian régime comes to an end the influence of the one European power which is most closely associated with it in the minds of every Turk will be involved in its fall. It is therefore of the utmost importance to Germany, merely from the point of view of the internal situation at Constantinople, apart from all financial or international considerations, to enlist with a view to future developments, which may not be very remote, as many foreign interests as possible in support of the greatest undertaking she has entered upon in Turkey. She cannot hope to complete the Baghdad Railway within Abdul Hamid's lifetime, even if his life were a better one than it would for various reasons appear to be, and what will happen when Abdul Hamid disappears the most intelligent statesmanship cannot foresee. But it can foresee the expediency of being forearmed against possible contingencies. If, without sacrificing the substantial control she has acquired over the Baghdad Railway, she can engineer a combination which would secure to her in all circumstances the co-operation of Great Britain, France, and others—but above all of Great Britain—she will be in a vastly better position to await events that will necessarily to some extent jeopardise, and may even suddenly bring down with a rush, the unsupported fabric of her influence at Constantinople.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BAGHDAD RAILWAY CONVENTION OF 1903

IF, as I have shown, it was Germany's interest to try and enlist the co-operation of foreign capital and the political support of other powers—and more especially of England—for the Baghdad Railway, it was clearly necessary that the Anatolian Company, of which the essentially German character was too patent to all, should retire discreetly into the background and make room for an at least outwardly more cosmopolitan arrangement. Whilst the Deutsche Bank was preparing the ground in London and Paris, fresh negotiations were being conducted all through 1902 at Constantinople, which resulted in the creation of a new Company to be styled the "Imperial Ottoman Baghdad Railway Company," and the conclusion of a Convention between the founders of that company and the Ottoman Government, embodying with certain amendments and additions the provisions contained in the Convention of January 16th, 1902. The definitive Convention was signed at Constantinople on March 5th, 1903, by Zihni Pasha, the Minister of Commerce and Public Works, on behalf of the Turkish Government, and by Herr Arthur Gwinner, President of the Deutsche Bank of Berlin, and Dr. Zander, Director-General, and M. Huguenin, Assistant Director-General of the Anatolian Railways on behalf of the new Company.

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On the same date the Cahier des Charges, accompanying the Convention, and the Statutes of the new Company, received the sanction of the Turkish Government. The French text of the Convention will be found in the Appendix. But as it forms the charter of an undertaking which may be destined to play quite as important a part in Western Asia as the Eastern Chinese or Manchurian Railway has played in Eastern Asia, it deserves to be carefully examined, and to this end some explanatory comments may not be out of place.

Under Article I. the Ottoman Government grants a concession to the Anatolian Railway Company for the construction and working of a prolongation of the Konia line (Anatolian Railway) to Baghdad and Basra, passing through, or as near as possible to, the towns of Keraman, Eregli, Kardash-Beli, Adana, Hamidieh, Osmanieh, Bagtcheh, Kazanali, Killis, Tell-Habesh, Harran, Ras-ul-Ain, Nussibin, Avniat, Mosul, Tekrit, Sadijeh, Baghdad, Kerbela, Nedjef, Zubeir, and Basra; as well as of branch lines (1) from Tell-Habesh to Aleppo, (2) from a point to be hereafter determined to Urfa, (3) from Sadijeh to Khanikin, and (4) from Zubeir to a point on the Persian Gulf to be settled by common accord between the Ottoman Government and the concessionnaire.

The original plan had been to carry on the transcontinental line, not from Konia, but from Angora, the northern extension of the Anatolian Railway system, through Sivas and Diarbekir to the Tigris. The Sultan had from the first strongly favoured that plan, as it presented great strategical advantages from the Turkish point of view, enabling troops to be moved up rapidly in case of need all along the line from Baghdad towards the Russian frontier beyond

Erzeroum. But the Germans, who had doubtless received some intimation of the views held in St. Petersburg, which subsequently found diplomatic expression in the "Black Sea Basin" agreement of March, 1900, decided to reject the northern route in favour of the southern one. From Konia the first section of the new railway as far as Eregli presents no serious difficulties. It continues to run so far over the Anatolian plateau at an altitude of about 3,000 feet. But, after reaching Eregli, it is immediately confronted by the great mountain barrier which separates the Anatolian plateau from the plains of Mesopotamia. The difficulties it will have to surmount are picturesquely described by Mr. Whigham in one of the chapters he devotes to the Baghdad Railway in his instructive book on *The Persian Problem*. Advantage is to be taken first of the wild cañon of the Chakit Su, which cleaves the Taurus range in twain, and then of the historic pass known as the Cilician Gates, through which the path of conquest has been trod in turn by many an invading army, from the days of Xerxes and Darius down to those of the great Egyptian, Ibrahim Pasha. Thence the railway will cross the small and fertile plain of Adana, before scaling the second but less formidable rampart which falls away in easier slopes towards the basin of the Euphrates and the Tigris. The two sections from Eregli to Adana, and from Adana to Tell-Habesh, where the branch line will diverge to Aleppo and Northern Syria, will certainly prove the most difficult and costly of all, as they will necessitate altogether nearly a hundred miles of blasting and tunnelling. After emerging from the Taurus mountains the line, instead of sweeping round the foothills through the fairly populous and fertile districts of

Urfa and Diarbekir into the upper valley of the Tigris and down to Mosul, is to be carried in a straight line across the desert between the twin rivers of Mesopotamia to Mosul, and thence down the desolate right bank of the Tigris to Baghdad. It is true that a feeder is to be thrown out to Urfa, and others are contemplated later on to Marash, Aintab, Birejik, Mardin, Erbil, and to Tuzkurmatli and Salahieh in the Kerkuk district. But the proposed route for the main line would hardly have been adopted by the Company had not the kilometric guarantee rendered it financially independent of the immediate resources of the country to be traversed between the Taurus and Baghdad.

From Baghdad a very important branch is to go off to the Persian frontier at Khanikin, whence one of the chief trade routes into Persia lies through Kermanshah and Hamadan to Teheran. The annual value of the British trade carried on with Persia by this route is estimated at £750,000—a fact which serves incidentally to illustrate the many-sided bearings of the Baghdad Railway upon British interests. From Baghdad the main line is to trend back to the Euphrates and cross it again in order to touch at the two sacred cities of the Shiah Mussulmans, Kerbela and Nedjef, where the mere pilgrim traffic from Persia and from India must prove a considerable source of revenue, on the way down to Basrah, the chief port of the Shatt-el-Arab, and to its appointed terminus, wherever it may ultimately be, on the Persian Gulf. The barest preliminary surveys have, however, yet been made of the Mesopotamian sections of the railway, which will certainly present some rather serious difficulties, owing to the intricate network of swamps and marshes that cover so large a portion of the great fluvial delta.

The total length of the new railway, including the branches, for the construction of which immediate provision is made, is not set down anywhere in the Convention, even approximately, though in view of the kilometric guarantee to which the Turkish Government is pledged, it would seem to be a very material point. It may be estimated roughly at 1,750 miles, and if we add for the existing Anatolian railways 625 miles, and for the Smyrna-Kassaba and Mersina-Adana railways, which have already passed under German control, another 400 miles, the entire system will amount to an aggregate of nearly 2,800 miles, independently of the further extensions already contemplated, and of the ultimate absorption of Syrian and Arabian railways.

The concession is granted (Article II.) for ninety-nine years, but in reality it will extend over a slightly longer period. For the ninety-nine years' term will run for each of the sections into which the line is to be divided from the date when the State bonds to be issued by the Ottoman Government are handed over in respect of it. The Anatolian railways' concession, which was originally for a similar term of ninety-nine years, whereof fifteen have already expired, is at the same time extended so as to cover the full period of the new Company's concession.

The new line is to be divided up for purposes of construction into sections, each of approximately 200 kilometres (Article III.). These sections are not specified, but it is understood that starting from Konia the main line to the Persian Gulf will comprise twelve sections, viz. Konia-Eregli, Eregli-Adana, Adana-Tell Habesh (whence the branch line to Aleppo), Tell-Habesh-Harran (whence the branch line to Urfa), Harran-Nussibin, Nussibin-Mosul, Mosul-Tekrit,

Tekrit-Baghdad (with a branch line from Sadijeh to Khanikin on the Persian frontier), Baghdad-Nedjef, Nedjef-Zubeir and Basra (two sections), and finally Zubeir to the Persian Gulf.

Article IV. binds the concessionnaire to begin work on the first section within three months from approval of the plans, and to complete it within two years. At the same time it is provided that the whole line and its branches shall be completed within eight years, a curiously short allowance for the completion of the other sections when compared with the two years allowed for completion of the first section alone. But this article contains another still more curious provision. The term fixed for the completion of the whole line is subject not only to the punctual fulfilment by the Ottoman Government of its financial obligations towards the concessionnaire, which is a very natural stipulation, but also to delays arising from *force majeure;* and *force majeure* includes, as well as war between European powers, any radical change in the financial situation of Germany, England, or France. As there is nothing to indicate what shall be deemed to constitute such a radical change, nor who shall determine when such a radical change shall be held to have taken place, this provision appears liable to very elastic construction.

The railway is to be built (Article VII.) in the first instance for a single line, but a second line is to be laid when the gross kilometric receipts shall have reached 30,000 francs per annum.

Article VIII. provides for the creation of an Ottoman Joint Stock Company under the name of "Imperial Ottoman Baghdad Railway Company," which shall take the place of the Anatolian Railway Company in

all that concerns the new line from Konia to the Persian Gulf with its branches. The Anatolian Railway Company engages not to transfer its lines to any other than the Imperial Ottoman Baghdad Railway Company, and the latter binds itself not to part with its property in any shape or form.

Article IX. allows the Company during construction to acquire and use steam and sailing vessels and other craft on the Shatt-el-Arab, the Tigris, and the Euphrates, for the transport of materials and other requirements. Considering how jealous the Turkish Government is of all navigation rights on those waterways, this clause, even with the restrictions attached to the permission, is of considerable significance, for when the Company has once acquired the plant necessary for navigating those waters and established the wharves and warehouses it is entitled to construct at Baghdad and Basra under another article of the concession, it is, at least, improbable that it will consent to relinquish the advantages of navigation.

Article XII. opens up the way for an almost indefinite extension of the new Company's control over the railways, not merely of Asia Minor and Mesopotamia, but of Syria and Northern Arabia. Whilst professing to safeguard the rights of the Damascus-Hamah Railway Company, a French company at present, it secures to the Baghdad Railway Company prior rights for the construction of any branch connecting it with the Mediterranean between Mersina and Tripoli in Syria. The Baghdad Railway Company is thus brought into contact with the Syrian railway system, which is made up at present of several small lines that would therefore seem bound to pass ultimately under the control of their powerful neighbour, and eventually with the

line which the Sultan is engaged in building from Damascus *viâ* Mezarib to Mecca. Already in 1901 the Anatolian Company was approached by Abdul Hamid with the request that it should take up a contract for completing the Hedjaz Railway, of which the small section that had then been built was proving a severe drain upon his Majesty's purse. One of the considerations for which the Sultan granted the Baghdad Railway concession is believed to have been a promise of assistance in carrying out this pet project which would ultimately link up by rail the seats of his temporal and spiritual sovereignty.

Article XXIII. gives the Company the right to establish ports on the Tigris at Baghdad, on the Shatt-el-Arab at Basra, and at the terminal point on the Persian Gulf. With the powers conferred upon it, the Company as the owner of the wharves, quays, warehouses, etc., which it is authorised to construct, must inevitably acquire complete control of the traffic by water as well as by land. Mention may also be made in this connection of Article XXIX., which forbids the working of any section of the line between Baghdad and Basra that may have been built before completion of the main line from Konia to Baghdad. The new Company clearly has no wish to see that district opened up from the Persian Gulf before it has obtained access to it from the North.

The financial obligations of the Ottoman Government are set forth in Article XXXV. It guarantees a two-fold kilometric annuity, one of 11,000 francs per kilometre, built and opened to traffic, and one of 4,500 francs per kilometre towards working expenses, and provides for the mode of payment of these annuities. An Ottoman State loan at 4 per cent., with a sinking

fund of ·087538 per cent., to be guaranteed by special appropriations which shall be settled before the construction of each successive section is commenced, is to represent the kilometric annuity of 11,000 francs, the Company receiving bonds of a face value of 269,110·65 francs per kilometre, built and opened to traffic. For the first section beyond Konia, bonds to the nominal value of 54,000,000 francs are to be issued in the first instance. The annuity of 4,500 francs per kilometre towards working expenses, which is to be gradually reduced as the gross kilometric receipts reach given amounts, is guaranteed on the surplus of the guarantees already appropriated to the Anatolian Railway. The Baghdad Railway Company, moreover, pledges to the holders of the state bonds the whole line from Konia to the Persian Gulf and its branches, and all its rolling stock, etc., and its share of the net receipts. The bondholders, however, will have no right to interfere in the administration of the Company. The liabilities of the Ottoman Government under this clause are heavy. It is true that in respect of the Anatolian Railway a kilometric guarantee only very slightly inferior in amount was given by the Porte, that the revenue of both the Konia and Angora lines has shown remarkable expansion, and that as a set off to the proportionately diminishing burden on the Treasury, Turkey has materially benefited by the increased prosperity of the provinces thus opened up to trade and agriculture. But the Anatolian Railway, like the two railways from Smyrna, has tapped the richest parts of Asia Minor, and if the first two sections of the Baghdad Railway beyond Konia may also be expected to earn a fair revenue, the same can certainly not be predicated of the further sections, and especially

not of those which cross the arid wastes of the upper Euphrates and Tigris basin. There, even according to German estimates, many years and even decades must elapse before there can be any results to show for the heavy annual payments which the Turkish Exchequer will have to meet. Even in what were of old the most fertile tracts of Mesopotamia, extensive and costly works of both irrigation and drainage will be required in addition to the railway, if anything like its ancient prosperity is to be restored. Many different calculations have been made as to the amount which the kilometric guarantee on the whole Baghdad line is likely to reach, and a very moderate estimate places it at over £1,000,000 per annum after allowing for probable revenue. How is the Turkish Exchequer, in its condition of chronic penury, to provide such a large sum? The Convention itself leaves this question unanswered. But just after the conclusion of the 1902 Convention the Anatolian Company is stated to have intimated to the Porte that it would accept as security for the kilometric guarantee appropriations from an increase of the Turkish Customs dues, from the creation of certain monopolies, or from the unification of the Ottoman debt.

Nor does Article XXXV. represent the whole of Turkey's financial obligations. Under Article XXXVII. the Turkish Government is to provide two further annuities of 350,000 francs each, one for a period of thirty years to cover the cost of betterment works to the extent of 8,000,000 francs on the Anatolian Company's lines, and another, to commence as soon as the new line reaches Aleppo, for the purpose of covering the cost of express train services.

Under various other articles a number of minor but

valuable rights are conferred upon the Company; exemption from Customs dues for all materials, machinery, rolling-stock, iron, wood, coal imported from abroad during the period of construction and extension, and exemption from all taxation of the Company's entire property and revenue during the whole term of the concession; mining and quarrying and forest rights within a zone of twenty kilometres on either side of the line; the right to establish warehouses, elevators, etc.; to manufacture bricks and tiles, and to make free use of any natural water power in the vicinity of the line for traction and lighting purposes; all of which tend to smooth the way for a monopoly of the economic exploitation of the country.

The usual provision is made to enable the Ottoman Government to resume possession of the railway at any moment, but on conditions so onerous as to render the provision practically illusory. The annuity to be paid to the Company in such event until the expiry of the concession is to be calculated on the basis of 50 per cent. of the average gross revenue during the last five years preceding resumption of possession, and is, in no circumstances, to amount to less than 12,000 francs per kilometre. Nor can the Ottoman Government resume possession in order to lease the railway to any other company.

On the other hand, the Company undertakes to make provision for postal and telegraphic services under the control of the Ottoman Government for the transport of troops in time of war and of peace, and for the establishment, at its own expense, of the military posts required by the Ministry of War up to a total expenditure of 4,000,000 francs, the Government, moreover, remaining at liberty to fortify all such points as it may

deem necessary. The Company also undertakes that within five years from the opening of each section the *personnel* employed upon it, with the exception of the superior officials, shall be composed exclusively of Ottoman subjects. All the officials are to wear the fez and a uniform to be chosen by the Ottoman Government. And finally, during the duration of the concession, the Company is to contribute annually £T.500 to the *Asile des Pauvres!* The caution money to be deposited on this gigantic concession was fixed at the modest sum of £T.30,000.

The *Cahier des Charges* accompanying the concession contains detailed provisions with regard to the construction of the line, of which the gauge is to be 1 m. 435–1 m. 455 inside the rails, and with regard to rates for passengers and freight. It also provides for a daily service of ordinary trains in both directions, and for an express service, weekly, between Haidar Pasha and Aleppo, and fortnightly to the Persian Gulf, with an average speed of 45 kilometres an hour for the first five years after the line is opened to traffic, and afterwards of 60 kilometres an hour. This would work out to about 72 hours in the first instance for the journey from Constantinople to the Persian Gulf, and 54 hours only if the counsels of perfection contemplated in the second instance are ever fulfilled.

Another clause of the *Cahier des Charges* is of peculiar significance. The specifications for metallic bridges are to be drawn up in accordance with the last circular of either the Prussian or the French Ministry of Public Works, and the rails, sleepers, etc., are to be of the type adopted by the Prussian State railways.

The Statutes regulate the constitution of the "Imperial Ottoman Baghdad Railway Company" to be

created under Article VIII. of the Convention. Though primarily formed to carry out the concession conveyed by that Convention, the new Company explicitly reserves power to acquire interests in any other railways already built or to be built in the whole of the Ottoman Empire. It is to have its seat in Constantinople. Whilst the Anatolian Railway Company undertakes to transfer to the new Company under Article 5 the concession granted to it under the above Convention, it nevertheless preserves for its own exclusive benefit all rights and obligations concerning the old railway lines, as well as those which it derives from Articles II., XXXIII., and XXXVII. of the above Convention.

Under Article 6 the initial share capital of the Company is fixed at 15,000,000 francs. The Anatolian Railway Company shall subscribe 10 per cent. of the share capital, and shall not alienate its holding without the consent of the Ottoman Government. The Ottoman Government shall also have the right to subscribe up to 10 per cent. of the share capital.

Article 12 states that the Company will be administered by a council of administration consisting of eleven members, three of whom shall be nominated by the Anatolian Railway Company. The others will be appointed by the general assembly. Three members shall be Ottoman subjects.

The most important article, however, is Article 20, under which the council is invested with the widest powers for administering the property and affairs of the Company, "*et peut même transiger et compromettre.*" For it is in virtue of these powers that the Germans, being so far in sole control, were able to negotiate abroad and to make the proposals for British co-operation which his Majesty's Government ultimately

had under their consideration. These proposals certainly involved considerable modifications of the arrangements set forth in the document signed at Constantinople, and the British Government was, no doubt, justified in declaring that the latter had not come within their purview. Nevertheless, the bearing of the whole question can hardly be correctly appreciated unless those proposals are studied in the light of the original arrangements they were intended to modify.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BAGHDAD RAILWAY AND BRITISH INTERESTS

AS one of the main arguments put forward in support of British co-operation was the international character which had already been imparted to the undertaking by the promise of French co-operation, it may be well to examine in the first place the nature and extent of such French co-operation. In France powerful stock exchange influences were induced at an early date to favour participation in the German scheme. It was closely connected with a project for the unification of the Ottoman Debt promoted mainly by the French bondholders, who now hold the bulk of Turkish Government securities, and as the unification promises to create a surplus revenue which might be appropriated to the kilometric guarantee on the Baghdad Railway, Germany had undertaken to lend diplomatic support to that project in Constantinople. Moreover, since the two French railway companies in Asia Minor, the Smyrna-Kassaba and the Adana-Mersina, had been compelled to throw in their lot with the Anatolian Company, a certain community of material interests had been established in that respect between the French and the Germans. Before the signature of the preliminary Convention, December 23rd, 1899, with the Porte, the Germans had definitely agreed

to reserve participation for French capital, and it was finally arranged in February last before the signature of the new Convention that its participation should be equal to that of German capital. The French Government, on the other hand, always anxious to avoid giving offence to Russia, who had repeatedly given more or less open expression to her hostility to the Baghdad Railway scheme, had been careful not to depart from a prudent attitude of official neutrality. Nothing indeed could be more categorical than the statement made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Chamber on March 24th, 1892, that French diplomacy had never interfered officially or semi-officially in the matter. The action of the French Ambassador at Constantinople, and M. Delcassé's own language, betrayed, however, a disposition to give as benevolent a character as possible to the neutrality of France. That was all the Germans could expect, and all they required, from the French Government, at whose hands they had no special favours to ask. They wanted only the co-operation of French capital, and so long as no official pressure was brought to bear against it, they had every reason to anticipate success.

In England the situation was quite different, and much less promising. Yet except, perhaps, from the purely financial point of view British co-operation was far more important to Germany than French co-operation. It was not, in fact, financial co-operation so much as political co-operation the Germans had to seek for in England. Some years ago, when the German scheme was still in its embryonic stage and Anglo-German relations were more friendly than they have been recently, British statesmen had been informally approached from Berlin and had, very properly, ex-

pressed their appreciation of Germany's apparent desire to secure British sympathy and support on terms of mutual benefit to both countries. In the meantime, however, the attitude of Germany during the South African war, the virulence of the German Press, and the more guarded, but scarcely less hostile, utterances of German statesmen, had given deep offence in this country. This was, however, no reason for either British ministers or British capitalists to refuse to consider any proposals, merely because they happened to be "made in Germany," which could be shown to be really beneficial to British interests. But it was a reason for the utmost caution and circumspection. To satisfy British public opinion a very strong case had to be made out.

The Germans very adroitly professed themselves anxious to place the negotiations on a purely business basis. It was primarily a matter of finance to be dealt with on its merits by financiers with financiers. The Deutsche Bank of Berlin, whilst the final convention was under negotiation at Constantinople, approached certain influential houses established in London with a view to the formation of a British group of capitalists who should co-operate with the German and other groups. This was, however, a polite fiction which it ultimately proved impossible to keep up. The London houses were not prepared to undertake so large a financial operation, of which the political bearings were obvious, unless they were assured of the approval and support of the British Government. The British Government naturally were unable to promise their approval and support unless adequate provision was made for safeguarding what they conceived to be the chief British interests concerned in the matter. The

Germans again were not prepared to make such provision unless the British Government pledged themselves to certain conditions which would have directly committed the State to considerable responsibilities. Thus, by the very force of inherent circumstances, the negotiations from being nominally financial became essentially political, and had to be directed willy-nilly by the Government, though they continued to be conducted through financial intermediaries instead of through the customary diplomatic channels.

The main point ostensibly at issue in these negotiations was the share which British capital was to acquire in the control of the railway. The Constantinople Convention and the statutes of the new Company gave the Germans an absolutely overwhelming control. The Anatolian Company was to preserve its independent entity, and be represented by three directors out of a total of eleven on the new Company's Board, whilst three other directors were to be Ottoman subjects, who would presumably be little more than clay under the German potter's hand. Thus there only remained five seats to be divided between the Deutsche Reichsbank and the British, French and other groups that might co-operate with it. This was, of course, an impossible arrangement, and the Germans readily admitted it in London, as they had already admitted it in Paris. They declared themselves willing to enlarge the board, and to provide for the equitable representation of the British element upon it. The precise nature of the proposals for giving effect to that purpose has not been officially disclosed, though it has been stated on good authority that the German, French, and British groups were each to provide 30 per cent. of the capital, the balance of 10 per cent. being made up from

other quarters. Whether, even if the British element had been nominally placed on a footing of complete equality with the specifically German element, equality of control would have been really secured, seems very doubtful, as in addition to the specifically German element, other elements under German control, such as Austrian and Swiss, would have remained available to turn the scales in favour of Germany unless the French had been constantly ready to act solid with the British —an unlikely contingency in view of the, at least partial, community of financial interests between the French and the Germans. Still the concessions which the Germans were ready to make in this and also in other directions were considerable. British industry was to be assured of a proportionate share in the construction and equipment of the railway. Exception was naturally taken in London to the retention by the Anatolian Railway Company of its exclusive rights over the existing lines from Constantinople, by which alone the Germans would have been able permanently to control access to the new railway, and thus to exercise a paramount influence over the entire system. Here, again, the Germans, without definitely binding themselves, held out the prospect of an eventual fusion of the two Companies, the Anatolian Company surrendering to the new Company all the rights which it at present still reserved to itself. But if all these German proposals and assurances were not, as far as they went, unsatisfactory, they were always coupled with conditions of which the significance was unmistakable.

These conditions, as set forth by Mr. Balfour in the House of Commons, were threefold. Assurances were to be obtained from the British Government, firstly, that they would not object to a reasonable increase of the

Turkish Customs duties, of which a part should be used in guaranteeing the Baghdad Railway; secondly, that if the Baghdad Railway should prove to be a substantially better route for conveying the mails to India, it should be used for their conveyance on terms to be agreed upon hereafter; and, thirdly, that Great Britain should lend her good offices in providing a proper terminus on the Persian Gulf at or near Koweyt.

To two, at least, of these conditions there were strong *primâ facie* objections from the British point of view apart from the general merits of the scheme. With regard to the Turkish import dues, we had been the first to recognise that it might be to our advantage as well as to that of Turkey that we should agree to an increase, if we could obtain in return some mitigation of the evils from which trade suffers all over Turkey under administrative corruption and misgovernment. The British Government actually agreed some years ago to a specific tariff on a higher scale than the present *ad valorem* tariff, on condition that the Turkish internal and export dues should be abolished, that bonded warehouses should be established, and other custom-house facilities granted for the benefit of foreign trade generally. But all these conditions have remained unfulfilled, and there would be less chance than ever of securing their ultimate fulfilment if we were to surrender for another purpose, such as the creation of revenue to meet the charges of the Baghdad Railway, the one lever we shall sooner or later have an opportunity of using for the protection of our commercial interests. Moreover, until a new financial scheme was agreed to for the reorganisation of the Turkish debt, any increase of the import dues was already pledged to the bondholders under the Decree of Muharrem.

With regard to a British postal subsidy for the transmission of mails to India by the Baghdad Railway, the assurance asked for was either supererogatory or designed to commit the British Government to an altogether premature obligation. When the Baghdad or any other line of railway opening up a new route for our Indian mails is completed the British Post Office will naturally use it if it presents sufficient advantages over the present route, and pay a proper price for the use of it. But as far as can be judged by any estimates yet put forward, it is extremely doubtful whether the Baghdad Railway, assuming it to be made, will present any sufficient advantages. According to the most favourable estimate, it might enable the British mails to be landed at Karachi three days and sixteen hours ahead of present schedule time at Bombay. Except for the north-west provinces, twenty-four hours must be deducted from that estimate for the extra land journey to destination in India from Karachi as compared with Bombay. Another twenty-four hours at least may be deducted for the difference between the present schedule time and real time, as the mails are constantly landed at Bombay a full day ahead of schedule time. The maximum gain that can be shown in favour of the Baghdad route would therefore amount only to one day sixteen hours, a gain which might very easily be reduced to the vanishing point by a reasonable acceleration of the steamship service between Europe and Bombay. But, at best, the question of time is not the only one to be considered. Who will guarantee the same regularity and safety with which our Indian mails are delivered to-day, when they are carried by rail across inhospitable regions inhabited by semi-civilised and often turbulent races, and perpetually

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liable to those chronic outbreaks of disorder which are the inevitable outcome of Turkish misrule? Nor is this all. We can hardly afford to subsidise two mail routes to India, and, if we give a subsidy to the Baghdad Railway, we shall have to diminish or to withdraw altogether the subsidies at present granted to British shipping companies. Now we are essentially a sea-power, and before we undertake to transfer so important a mail service as that between the Mother Country and India from the ocean highways which we can hope to control in time of war as well as of peace to a land route across two continents, neither of which we can control, the advantages in favour of the latter should not merely be estimated on paper, but tested by experience and placed beyond all shadow of doubt.

To the third condition put by the Germans—namely, facilities for establishing the Persian Gulf terminus of the line at Koweyt, no objection could be taken on its own merits. Indeed, if a great trunk line is to be built from the Bosphorus to the Persian Gulf, it is in many respects desirable that its terminus should be located within the territory of a chief who has placed himself under our protection. On the other hand, the Baghdad Railway probably needs Koweyt far more than we need the Baghdad Railway. In that part of the Persian Gulf there is no point better fitted by nature to become the terminus of a great railway system. There may be other points available, for instance, Umm Khasa, at the head of the Khor Abdallah, which lies, it is alleged, outside the actual territory of the Sheikh of Koweyt. But Umm Khasa is certainly not more suitable than Koweyt itself, and Koweyt might, in certain circumstances, prove inconveniently close to it. Therefore it would unquestionably be a great boon

for the Baghdad Railway to have the assurance of friendly access to Koweyt. Whether it was expedient for the British Government to pledge themselves to the granting of such a boon depends entirely upon the view taken of the scheme as a whole from the point of view of British Imperial interests, political as well as commercial.

The chief arguments advanced by the two members of the British Cabinet who appeared to favour the scheme were, firstly, that this was a great undertaking, destined to confer upon a vast and interesting region the blessings of civilisation, and that England owed it to herself not to stand aloof, and, secondly, that it would open up a new route from Europe to India, and that this country, instead of repeating the blunder it committed forty years ago when it left the Suez Canal to be built exclusively by foreign enterprise, should lend a helpful hand from the beginning, so as to make sure of a share in its ultimate control. The railway, it was asserted, would be built sooner or later, with or without us, and if without us, we could not depend upon a recurrence of the same good fortune which had enabled us to repair our original mistake in connection with the Suez Canal by acquiring the Khedive's interest in it.

The first argument is merely an appeal to sentiment, and however commendable the sentiment, it may be pointed out that there are many other undertakings equally conducive to the spread of civilisation which this country might promote—some of them perhaps more pertinent to our national interest—and that with the best will in the world our resources are not inexhaustible. The second argument is more practical and more plausible, but it is by no means convincing. To begin with, there is this fundamental difference between the two schemes, that the Suez Canal opened

up through communication by the shortest sea-route between the United Kingdom and India, whereas the Baghdad Railway proposes to open up a land route. Our interests in any highway of the seas must always be incomparably greater than our interest in any transcontinental highway. The former are of vital concern to us; the latter directly affect only our convenience, though indirectly and as an instrument that may be used against us, a transcontinental highway towards India must always be a potential danger. It might indeed be argued with some force that in facilitating the construction of a railway, which we could never materially control, from the shores of the Bosphorus, which may at any day pass out of the hands of the Turk into the keeping of some great European power, to a terminus which may only be temporarily located in so remote a corner of the Persian Gulf as Koweyt, we should be committing the precise counterpart of our former blunder, when we sought to prevent the removal of such an obstruction to our communications with India by sea as the unpierced isthmus of Suez formerly constituted. It is certainly singular that in the course of the several parliamentary debates on a question which concerns India very closely no representative of the India Office ever spoke, nor was any statement made of the views of the Indian Government. It would be interesting to know why.

But it is unnecessary to press those arguments. We need not regard the Baghdad Railway as any menace to India, nor look with jealousy upon its construction, and yet it may be undesirable for us to lend it a helping hand in the shape it has assumed under German auspices, or, at any rate, to do so except on much more favourable terms than have yet been offered to us.

Without giving way to national prejudices, which

would rule out Germany from among the powers with whom this country should in any circumstances co-operate, one may be allowed to ask whether our experience of co-operation with Germany in China, either politically, under the Anglo-German agreement of 1900, or economically, under different railway agreements between English and German groups of capitalists, has proved so satisfactory that we should wish to repeat it in Asiatic Turkey. Or, if we confine our purview to Turkey, has German influence been exercised at Constantinople with so much consideration for British interests, either political or economic, that we should tie ourselves up with it indefinitely? What assurance have we, in the present condition of the Turkish Empire, that Asia Minor and Mesopotamia may not become the scene of the same sort of racial anarchy which is now chronic in European Turkey? And can we contemplate with equanimity the prospect of having in such an emergency to intervene with Germany for the protection of our joint railway interests amidst warring Kurds and Arabs, Turks and Armenians? Has Germany ever shown any disposition to deviate, however slightly, out of consideration for us, from her policy of constant subserviency to her Eastern neighbour in every phase and every branch of the Eastern question? And if not, why should we cheerfully share with her, and perhaps give her an opportunity of unloading altogether upon our shoulders, the burden of potential complications with Russia in which she sees clearly and anxiously enough that this scheme may sooner or later involve her? Are there not causes enough of friction, if not of conflict, between Russia and ourselves in other parts of Asia, where we have much more vital interests to defend, without wilfully creating a fresh

one where our interests are not vitally engaged, in association with a dubious partner who might at any moment leave us in the lurch, not necessarily from bad faith, but under the inexorable pressure of threatening events in Europe? It has, I know, been urged that with French co-operation in addition to our own there would be little danger, either of Russian jealousy, or of overwhelming German preponderancy. But even if the permanency of French co-operation were assured, it would be a very different sort of co-operation from that which is expected of this country. It would amount to nothing more than financial co-operation based upon the community of certain financial interests in France and in Germany which I have already explained. It will be time to place French co-operation on the same level of political significance as British co-operation when the French Government has been asked and has agreed to give official assurances ever so remotely analogous to those required from the British Government.

Financially and commercially the scheme is equally open to very grave objections. Twenty million pounds is a low estimate of its cost. That it will pay as a business venture, except possibly in a remote future, very few, even amongst German enthusiasts, are bold enough to assert. For many years it must be largely dependent upon the kilometric guarantees which it is to receive from the Turkish Government. It is therefore based in the main upon Turkish credit. Is that a satisfactory security upon which to encourage the investment of British capital? The great financial houses that are in the habit of promoting similar undertakings may see their way to a remunerative operation. But how about the British public, out of whose pockets the money will eventually have to come? Difficulties

may, and probably will, not arise at first. The next two or three sections of the line beyond Konia, like the existing Anatolian lines, may yield sufficient revenue to enable Turkey to bear the financial burden she has taken on to her shoulders. The *crux* will come when, after the costly work of crossing the Taurus mountains, the railway descends into the arid wastes of the Upper Euphrates and Tigris. Then if the Turkish Government should happen to default, we should have to face the alternative of taking some action, either in concert with others, or alone, for the protection of the British investor, or of leaving him to his fate, even though he had invested his money on the faith of official assurances that the construction of the railway was a matter of national interest.

The *crux*, moreover, will come just when the railway passes out of what must be regarded as the special sphere of Germany's commercial interests. Asia Minor proper is the field to which the Germans chiefly look for the expansion of their trade. It is there that commercially they will reap the chief benefit from the railway. We shall doubtless also to some extent share in it there. But if the proposed railway is destined to serve British commercial interests on any scale that would compensate us, for instance, for an increase of the Turkish import duties, that will be not in Asia Minor, but at the other end of the line, when it reaches the Mesopotamian delta and the Persian Gulf. There unquestionably British trade, as I have pointed out in a preceding chapter, has long felt the need of a railway, and to secure it we might well run some risks and make some sacrifices. But, as if to furnish a complete *reductio ad absurdum* of the vaunted parity of treatment of British interests under the proposed Baghdad

Railway scheme, it is formally stipulated in the Constantinople Convention between the Porte and the new Company that the sections of the great trunk line in which we are specially interested, viz. between Baghdad and the Persian Gulf, are not to be opened to traffic until every other section from Constantinople down to Baghdad has been completed. This was palpably a stipulation in restraint of British trade. Had we become a party to it, we should have been helping Germany to open up Asia Minor, where she would be the chief gainer, and to carry the railway through a great tract of unremunerative country, before we were allowed to tap the fertile regions of Mesopotamia from our own base on the Persian Gulf. Such a self-denying ordinance would have been no less prejudicial to our political than to our commercial interests.

Fortunately the British Government ultimately decided to reject the German proposals, and on April 23rd Mr. Balfour announced that he and his colleagues had come to the conclusion that those proposals did not give this country sufficient security for equal powers of control, constructions, and management, and that the assurances asked for could not therefore be given. It does not, however, appear from the Prime Minister's statement, or from any other ministerial utterances, that the Government had even then realised the broader aspects of the question upon which I have ventured to lay special stress. No doubt, apart from all other considerations, the object which the Government had had in view was a very proper one, namely, as Mr. Balfour himself explained it, "to place the railway, including the existing Anatolian Railway, throughout its whole length from sea to sea, under international control, and to prevent the possibility of preferential treatment for

the goods or subjects of any country." But even if this object could have been achieved, the political, financial, and commercial objections which go to the root of the question would not have been at all adequately met.

It can only be hoped that they will be more fully appreciated in responsible quarters whenever the British Government are again approached on the subject. That they will be again approached may be taken for granted. The same reasons which induced the Germans to solicit British co-operation this year will hold good in the future. For those reasons are not merely financial, though even from the financial point of view, German assertions that all arrangements have been made and will be carried out with or without us cannot be accepted quite so unreservedly as Mr. Balfour would have had us accept them. The change which has already come over the French attitude towards the scheme since the British Government rejected the German proposals is in itself significant enough. The Germans are tenacious people, and they will be careful not to betray their disappointment. Their cue is, of course, to proceed with the construction of the railway without displaying any concern about the future. They are, in fact, doing so, and we may be prepared to see the next two or three sections beyond Konia built without a hitch. But sooner or later they will have to face the difficulties to overcome which they wanted, and will still continue to want, our help.

When that day comes, must our reply be an unconditional *non possumus?* By no means, if our interests are properly safeguarded—not merely our interests in the railway itself as a business undertaking, but our Imperial interests in the regions which it specially

affects. For that purpose it may be suggested that instead of seeking to secure a theoretical equality of rights over a great trans-continental railway along which the interests of the different parties must necessarily be distributed unequally, we should try to secure parity of treatment by the mutual recognition of preponderating interests in the various regions which it traverses. Germany's interests, and such French financial interests as are bound up with hers, centre in Asia Minor. Ours centre in the Mesopotamian delta. Let us have the construction, management, and control of the railway on conditions to be mutually agreed upon, from the Persian Gulf up to Baghdad, including the branch line to the Persian frontier at Khanikin. Let the others have the same rights on similar terms with regard to the rest of the line from Constantinople downwards. We could push on from our base, whilst the others pushed on from theirs, and when the junction was once effected, the whole line could be worked on the basis of a joint traffic agreement, and for the common financial and commercial benefit of all the partners. Such a scheme would largely diminish the danger of international friction, and while there would be a complete fusion of common interests, such as the creation of a great international highway demands, the special interests of each partner would be localised within the area which afforded the greatest facility for their protection. There may be other solutions, but this is at least a practical solution which, without doing any prejudice to the legitimate interests of others, would serve, not to extend our responsibilities indefinitely, but to consolidate our own legitimate interests within their natural field of political and commercial development.

CHAPTER XX

KOWEYT

THE name of Koweyt was almost unknown to the present generation outside the Persian Gulf until it sprang into notoriety as the coveted terminus of the proposed German railway from Constantinople to Baghdad. Our own dreams of a British-built railway down the Euphrates valley vanished so long ago that few Englishmen probably recollect that, under the alternative name of Grane, from the resemblance to a pair of horns — in Arabic *Karnein* — which the curve of the bay presents, it was recommended in General Chesney's scheme as the best terminus for a railway to the Gulf. Even in the Gulf it was known but to few Europeans, as, although the best, though not, perhaps, as was at first believed, the only natural harbour in those waters, it offered little attraction to foreign traders, and lay outside the beaten track of steamers. The opportunities of visiting it are still few and far between, and I was fortunate to find at Basra a steamer that was to call in there on her way down the Gulf.

About eighty miles by land, as the crow flies, from Basra, and sixty-five miles by sea from the outer bar of the Shatt-el-Arab, Koweyt lies on the south side of a bay nearly twenty miles deep and about five miles

broad, which is well sheltered against all but westerly winds. The mouth of the bay is partially protected by two low islands, and the approach between shoals and low-lying sandbanks is not easy, as there are neither buoys nor lights at present to indicate the channels. But once inside, there is good and ample anchorage for all the fleets of the world in from four to nine fathoms of water, and, in spite of shelving shores, it would require no excessive expenditure of money or of engineering skill to make it a really commodious port. The town itself looks north and fronts the sea on a long ridge well above the water, whilst at the back it opens straight out into the spacious desert. The population amounts now to 15,000 or, at the outside, 20,000 souls, and consists almost exclusively of Arabs, whose tribal ancestors settled at Koweyt about three centuries ago. Many of the houses have stone foundations, and though sun-dried mud is the chief material, and few buildings have any architectural pretensions, the town presents altogether an appearance of solidity and prosperity, and especially of cleanliness, which is in pleasant contrast to the tumble-down squalor of the Persian towns of the Gulf. The bazaars are of considerable extent, and though to European eyes poorly stocked, they do a remunerative business with the caravans which come in from the desert to exchange the produce of the interior for the few imported luxuries of Beduin life. With the exception of a few date palms at Jehara, where the Sheikh has an inland residence, and one solitary tree that serves as a landmark for mariners approaching Koweyt from the Gulf, the land produces nothing, and is absolutely flat, bare, and desolate. So the main business of Koweyt is, and has always been, on the sea, for the men of Koweyt have been for

generations a hardy seafaring race, and their dhows, built in their own primitive yards, ply for trade, not only all over the Gulf, but into the Indian Ocean and far up into the Red Sea.

The question of Turkish sovereignty on the Persian Gulf in its broader aspects can be more conveniently dealt with when I take a general survey of the situation in the Gulf. Over Koweyt, at any rate, the Sultan never attempted to give practical effect to his shadowy authority until the German railway schemes drew attention to the importance it might acquire in the future as the terminus of a trans-continental railway through his Asiatic dominions. The Sheikh had the rank of a Turkish Kaimakam or local governor, but the title was regarded as purely honorific, and he was *de facto*, if not *de jure*, an independent ruler. When, in 1898, the Porte began to show its hand and claimed to bring Koweyt within the sphere of direct Turkish administration, the ruling chief, Sheikh Mubarak, on the advice, it is believed, of his friend, the Sheikh of Bahrein, appealed to Great Britain as the traditional guardian of the public peace in the Gulf; and, taking our stand on the maintenance of the *status quo*, we not only entered a formal protest against any attempt on the part of Turkey to curtail the Sheikh's authority, and showed our determination to defend him against any forcible interference, but concluded, early in 1899, a definite agreement with him by which his interests have been permanently placed under our special protection. At first the Turks seemed, nevertheless, inclined to try and carry matters with a high hand. Troops were from time to time reported to be on the march overland to occupy Koweyt, and on one occasion a force was sent down by sea from Basra, which pro-

ceeded to another destination when it found three British men-of-war lying ready for business in the bay. A *modus vivendi* has now been arrived at, and, so long as British ships are there to enforce it, the Turks will probably refrain from any overt act of aggression against Koweyt itself. But they are evidently bent upon confining Sheikh Mubarak's authority within the narrowest limits possible. On the other side of the sandy promontory which forms the northern shore of the bay of Koweyt, there is another deep indenture in the coast of the mainland. The greater part of this indenture is occupied by the large, low-lying, and swampy island of Bubyan; but to the north-east of this island, a long and narrow channel runs up inland from near the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab to Umm Khasa, where, in former times, a branch of the Shatt poured itself out into the sea. The Khor Abdallah shows, according to the charts, four fathoms of water at low tide, and there is believed to be good anchorage off Umm Khasa, which is absolutely sheltered. Failing Koweyt, it might therefore be converted into a harbour, and serve as a terminus for the Baghdad Railway. The Turks evidently received a hint to this effect, for they sent troops in 1902 to garrison Sefwan, about halfway between Basra and the head of the Khor Abdallah, and they have established military posts both at Umm Khasa and on Bubyan Island. They claimed even the right to occupy Subeya, on the sand-spit to the north of the bay of Koweyt, but they were not allowed to enforce their claim. Why the same reasons and the same arguments to which the Sultan has had to yield with regard to Koweyt should not have applied equally to other points of the coast, over which his rights of sovereignty are just as shadowy, it is difficult to see.

We may yet have cause to regret the consequences of this seemingly inexplicable inconsistency.

The position is, in other respects also, not altogether satisfactory. Sheikh Mubarak is the third son of the late Sheikh Muhammed es-Sebah, and he only succeeded in 1896 upon the death of his two elder brothers, who were murdered in one of those feuds which are generally of common occurrence in the families of petty Arab chieftains, but from which the records of the ruling family at Koweyt had hitherto been creditably free. The rulers of Koweyt appear indeed to have been an exceptionally long-lived race, and the present Sheikh's grandfather was certainly something more than a centenarian. Colonel Pelly, who was Resident in the Gulf in the sixties and twice visited Koweyt, reports a conversation, in the course of which the then Sheikh said to him: "When my father was nearly a hundred and twenty years old he called me and said, 'I shall soon die. I have made no fortune and can leave you no money. But I have made many true friends; grapple them: while other states have fallen off around the Gulf from injustice or ill-government, mine has gone on increasing. Hold to my policy; and though you are surrounded by a desert and pressed on by a once hostile and still wandering set of tribes, you will still flourish.'" The present Sheikh has broken with the traditions of his family in the methods he adopted to secure for himself the possession of power, and he has had to reap in this respect what he sowed. The three sons of the two murdered men are naturally at deadly feud with their uncle, and he has another powerful enemy in one Jusef el Ibrahim, who is connected with him by marriage and acted as treasurer to his predecessor, with results which Mubarak, when he rose

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to power, found so little to his liking that the unjust steward thought it advisable to take refuge in flight. Jusef el Ibrahim and the three nephews sought protection with the Turks; and, though Mubarak was at first in excellent odour with the authorities of the vilayet and received from them the honorific title of Kaimakam, they rapidly transferred their favours to his rivals when he began to resist their encroachments and courted British support. Thus, while the Turks were pushing their military posts forward in the direction of Koweyt, the pretenders carried on their plots of revenge against Mubarak with the full cognisance, if not with the active assistance, of the Ottoman authorities. Jusef el Ibrahim was recognised by them as Sheikh of Dorah, on the Turkish bank of the Tigris just above Fao, and it was from Dorah that, early in September, 1902, he boldly equipped a raiding expedition for the capture of Koweyt by sea.

Two armed dhows with some hundred and fifty men, amongst them one of Mubarak's nephews, Hamud Ibn Jerah, were to make a descent in the dead of night upon Koweyt by water, whilst another body of partisans with one of the other nephews, Khalid Ibn Muhammed, were to co-operate by land. Mubarak received timely warning, and though the two dhows actually slipped into the harbour and landed two spies, they got wind of the preparations made for their reception and beat a hasty retreat. H.M.S. *Lapwing* also arrived during the night, and though the warning she had come to convey had already reached the Sheikh from native sources, she was able on the following morning to discover the raiding dhows off one of the sandbanks outside Koweyt, and cut off their retreat up the river. On sighting them Captain Armstrong sent off a cutter to

challenge them. As they hoisted no colours, and threatened to open fire if the man-of-war's boat drew nearer—thus committing an overt act of piracy on the high seas—the commander of the *Lapwing* manned his other boats and gave chase to them, he himself leading the way in the gig. Cut off from the river, the raiders made for the Persian coast, and, being hard pressed, they abandoned their dhows and fled across a mud-bank into some long grass, whence they opened a murderous fire upon the gig's crew as Captain Armstrong came up in hot pursuit to seize the derelict craft. One bluejacket was killed and two were wounded, and the commander himself had a narrow escape. Indeed, the consequences might well have been more serious had the Arabs, who were firing at very short range, made better practice. But our men replied vigorously, and as the *Lapwing's* other boats were drawing up in support, the Arabs soon dispersed on to the mainland and the *Lapwing* returned to Basra with her prizes. The details of this story deserve to be noted not so much because it is one of the many little adventures of ready pluck which too often pass unrecorded in the workaday life of the British Navy, but because it illustrates the peculiar difficulties of the situation in regard to Koweyt.

Ample evidence was produced that the expedition had been organised in Turkish territory, and there were trustworthy witnesses to speak to the names of those principally responsible for it. In fact, all the details were the subject of common gossip in the bazaars of Basra. Yet the Turkish authorities continued for a long time to affect scepticism and indifference, and they took no steps either to bring the offenders to book or to prevent a recurrence of similar undertakings, though the raid was organised under

their very eyes against a native chief who was known to enjoy the protection of Great Britain, and, in the repression of an audacious act of piracy, there had been loss of life to a British man-of-war. The Vali of Basra certainly did not take upon himself the responsibility of adopting an unfriendly attitude in so serious a matter, and he was evidently acting upon instructions from Constantinople, where the support of Germany with regard to anything connected with Koweyt seems to be taken, it must be hoped too confidently, as a foregone conclusion. The necessary pressure was, however, ultimately applied to the Porte, for, neither in connection with our police work in the Gulf could we allow the killing of a bluejacket to be condoned, nor with regard to the security of Koweyt could we allow conspiracies of such a nature to be hatched with impunity. The authorities at Basra sent up the papers in the case to the Court of Appeal at Baghdad, and, what is more important than that purely formal satisfaction, Jusef el Ibrahim and the Sheikh's recalcitrant nephews received a hint that they had better make themselves scarce. One story is that they went on pilgrimage to Mecca, another that they joined Ibn Rashid in the Jebel Shammar. At any rate, they disappeared.

Sheikh Mubarak is a man advancing in years, though if, as he told me, he is really seventy, he looks, I must say, very young and robust for his age. He was loud in his protestations of confidence in Great Britain, and he pointed with pride to the portraits of the King and Queen and of her late Majesty, which adorn the walls of his favourite chamber, high up above the sea, whence he can watch the goings and comings of his seafaring people, and sometimes, perhaps, descry

with a comfortable sense of relief the welcome smoke of a British gunboat entering the bay. He is a shrewd old Arab, and he no doubt quite realises that he has compromised himself hopelessly with the Turks. So long as he lives we can probably rely on his fidelity to the engagements he has contracted towards us, and we can, of course, uphold his authority, as part and parcel of the *status quo* on which we take our stand. But if he in turn falls a sudden victim to one of those feuds which cause so much mortality amongst Arab chieftains, or even if he is allowed to die peacefully in his bed, what is to happen should his successor prefer to accept all the consequences of the Sultan's sovereignty which Mubarak himself has, it must be remembered, repudiated only on second thoughts? In a few hours the Turks might be installed in Koweyt, and what would then be our position, with a new Sheikh who declined our "special protection," and with the Porte, which has never formally recognised it? Even in Mubarak's lifetime our present amorphous relations to Koweyt may place us at any moment in an awkward predicament. In accordance with their usual practice, the Turks, when Mubarak fell out with them, sought to mobilise the Emir of Nejd, Abdul Aziz Ibn Rashid, against him, and Mubarak replied by taking up the cause of the Wahabis, whose power has revived since the death of the present Emir's uncle, Muhammed Ibn Rashid, the well-known Sheikh of the Jebel Shammar. After some preliminary successes Mubarak and his allies were severely defeated (March 17th, 1901) by the Emir of Nejd near Aneyza, and one of Mubarak's younger brothers, Hamud, fell in battle, together with several other leading men of Koweyt. In 1902, however, the fortunes of war were more pro-

pitious, and Abdul Aziz Ibn Abdur Rahman, a grandson of the blind old Emir Feysal Ibn Saud, whom Muhammed Ibn Rashid treacherously dispossessed, took his revenge upon the usurper's successor by seizing the stronghold of Riad, which he has held ever since. Immediately after this success large numbers of tribesmen flocked to his standards, and though Ibn Rashid moved out against him again in the spring of 1903, he had to retire without venturing any serious attack. Both the Turks and ourselves have undertaken to discourage this intertribal warfare; and though they may not carry out their undertaking very scrupulously, they will certainly protest vehemently if their protégés get seriously worsted. But in the present state of things it is difficult to exercise any effective control over Mubarak's action in that direction, for he knows, or believes, that we are bound to support him in Koweyt whatever happens in the interior, where the rights and wrongs of the case can never be established on really trustworthy evidence.

Is it, moreover, likely, that apart from any difficulties which the Turks may raise, the *status* of a place which has already acquired a certain measure of international importance will be allowed to remain as undefined as it is at present? International law has shown itself of late years so adaptable to novel situations that it should not be impossible to discover some formula which would effectually cover our relations with Koweyt. But no time should be lost in discovering it. Otherwise we may find ourselves compelled to define the *status* of Koweyt in circumstances less favourable to our present contention that we are merely maintaining the *status quo*. Sheikh Mubarak has been visited in turn by the Russian consuls at Baghdad and at Bushire, and

he told me that they were both very anxious to impress upon him the advantages of Russian friendship and protection. These visits of Russian consuls and Russian men-of-war certainly do not take place in our interest, nor, if one may judge from the view generally taken in Russia of German railway schemes in Asia, in the interest of Germany; and though it would be foolish to overrate their significance, they show that the situation at Koweyt is being watched pretty closely by European diplomacy. It is being watched equally closely by all the other independent or quasi-independent rulers on the littoral of these waters, who, like Mubarak, have thrown in their lot with Great Britain. One of the first questions put to me by the Sultan of Muscat when I saw him a few days after I had been with Sheikh Mubarak was about the situation at Koweyt. The position we occupy all over the Persian Gulf is a very peculiar one, and it closely affects the credit and the interests of our Indian Empire. It is possibly—perhaps not improbably—in connection with Koweyt that it will for the first time be seriously challenged, and it behoves us to make up our minds in good time how we should meet such a challenge.

CHAPTER XXI

OUR RECORD IN THE PERSIAN GULF

IN a very remarkable article published in the *National Review* of September, 1902, Captain Mahan summed up his views of British policy with regard to the Persian Gulf in the following sentence: "Concession in the Persian Gulf, whether by formal arrangement [with other powers], or by neglect of the local commercial interests which now underlie political and military control, will imperil Great Britain's naval situation in the Farther East, her political position in India, her commercial interests in both, and the Imperial tie between herself and Australasia." So definite a pronouncement by perhaps the greatest authority on sea-power, writing, moreover, on this question with the complete impartiality of an American, could not be dismissed as mere idle panic-mongering, even by the staunchest advocates in this country of a policy of self-effacement. The English critics who demurred to his main conclusions took refuge, for the most part, in the contention that, as the Persian Gulf is an open sea to whose shores we hold no territorial title, we could not oppose the occupation of any part of it by another power acting in agreement with the titular owners, without the assumption on our part of a privileged position in, and of special rights over, its

waters for which there would be neither precedent nor justification.

Such a claim might, indeed, be unprecedented; but so also are the circumstances of the case. Anyone who has visited the Persian Gulf and studied the peculiar position we occupy there to-day, together with the events which have led up to it, would, I think, be puzzled to find even a distant parallel to it. In what other sea has a power with no territorial title to its shores discharged for a whole century all the duties which accompany territorial ownership, and which, had we not undertaken to discharge them, would have remained undischarged? Or what other power would have so discharged them without seeking a single exclusive advantage for itself in return for the sacrifices of life and treasure which it had thus incurred? If the Persian Gulf is to-day in the fullest sense an open sea to which the commerce and shipping of all nations have liberty and security of access on any errand of peace, it is so solely as the result of a century of British effort.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Persian Gulf was the arena of successive conflicts between the early pioneers of East Indian adventure—Portuguese, Dutch, French, British; but at the beginning of the nineteenth century the European factories which they had in turn established at different points of the coast had disappeared, and a long period of internal turmoil in Persia had reduced to a mere shadow the authority of the only Oriental monarchy which had ever exercised effective power on its shores. The whole littoral north and south from the mouth of the Tigris to the Indian Ocean was in the hands of petty Arab rulers, who were either independent tribal

chieftains or yielded merely some nominal allegiance. Almost all these Arab tribes, settled from more or less remote periods along the Gulf, had imported on to its waters the predatory habits of the desert. Their armed dhows scoured the Gulf and its approaches, and had grown almost as formidable to peaceful mariners as were ever the Barbary corsairs. Of the magnitude of the task upon which Great Britain entered when she undertook to restore peace and order in those lawless waters some idea may be gathered from the fact that within little more than one decade, between 1810 and 1821, besides the naval forces constantly maintained in active service, three large military expeditions, one of them of 3,500 men, had to be despatched from India before the Jowasmi corsairs were subdued, and a decisive blow dealt to the prestige and popularity of piracy. Several decades more elapsed before the Arabs were taught to prefer the peaceful ventures of trade and of pearl fishing to the more exciting pursuits of slave-raiding and buccaneering.

Even now it requires the vigilance of the ubiquitous British gunboat to prevent sporadic outbreaks of the old predatory instinct, for though both Persia and Turkey have been prompt enough to take advantage of the work of pacification done by British hands along the coast, and to demand recognition of their authority from the tribes whose powers of armed resistance we had already broken, neither of them has been able or willing to afford the slightest effectual co-operation in securing the peace of the sea. To the present day not only is every merchantman that plies for trade, whatever his flag may be, indebted to the police work patiently accomplished by generations of British ships for that peaceful access to peaceful markets which he

now enjoys as a matter of course, but he owes equally to their labours everything that has been done to diminish the natural perils and difficulties of navigation. The only surveys upon which the greater part of his charts have been compiled have been carried out by the British Navy or the Indian Marine. A British company, the British India Steam Navigation, has laid the only buoys which mark practicable channels and safe anchorages, and keeps up the only beacons which yet light the chief roadsteads. The Indian Government have laid and maintained the only cables by which telegraphic communication can be had with the outer world. When a Russian man-of-war visits Bunder Abbas to study the possibility of converting it into another Port Arthur, when a French squadron goes to Muscat to intimidate one of our oldest allies into the cession of a coaling station, or when German engineers come down to the Gulf to prospect for a terminus to the Baghdad Railway, they are each and all drawing upon the accumulated work of British pioneers in these strange and inhospitable waters. It is, above all, the *pax Britannica* we have laboriously established on land and on water up and down the whole coast which has restored, with the industries of peace, whatever measure of prosperity the native population now enjoys, and revived the internal and external trade in which the enterprise of all nations is free to take a share.

It is impossible to estimate the actual cost in money and in blood at which that *pax Britannica* has been established, but when one considers the naval expenditure it has annually involved for over a hundred years, the military expeditions it has from time to time necessitated, the political establishments, whose work largely consists in securing the observance of the

many covenants and treaties under which the tribes have been bound over to us to keep the peace, or voluntarily refer their local differences to us for arbitration and settlement, and last, but not least, the heavy and often unendurable strain to which the climate of one of the hottest regions in the world subjects the constitution of European residents, the cost must unquestionably have been very great. Yet, great as it has been, we have derived no material advantages for ourselves beyond those which British trade and British shipping can reap from the freedom and security of commerce and navigation in open competition with the rest of the world; we have claimed no direct compensation, no exclusive privileges; we have not only refrained from turning to account the absence of any effective authority along the coast in order to make territorial acquisitions for ourselves, but, perhaps with more generosity than wisdom, we have tolerated, and even encouraged, the establishment of effective authority by both Turkey and Persia without any guarantee that it might not be eventually used to our detriment.

We have acted in this matter solely under a self-denying ordinance, for the opportunities we have had in the course of the last hundred years for giving a territorial sanction to the authority we exercise in the waters of the Persian Gulf have been unlimited. In fact, all the way down the Gulf one passes point after point which we have occupied at some time or other during the last century, but not one of them have we retained after the necessity for temporary occupation appeared to have passed away. Muhammerah and the lower valley of the Karun river were occupied during the expedition of 1857, as was also Bushire. The

island of Kharak to the north-west of Bushire was occupied from 1838 to 1842, and again in 1857. Further down the coast, before coming to Lingah, we pass the island of Kais, where we had a military station during the pirate wars early in the last century. On the island of Kishm, facing Bunder Abbas, an important military and naval station was established in 1820, and a company of sepoys was maintained there until 1879, when we evacuated it, retaining only a small coal depôt at Bassiduh. At the mouth of the Straits of Ormuz, Jask, the telegraph station to which the Indo-European cable up the gulf was laid from Gwattur after it was shifted from Cape Musandim on the opposite coast, was occupied from 1879 to 1886, but Persia then laid claim to it, though she had hitherto exercised no vestige of authority over it, and the garrison was withdrawn in deference to the policy by which we have helped to invest Persian rule along the whole coast from the mouth of the Tigris to the frontiers of Baluchistan with an effective reality it would never have possessed without our intervention. Even those points on the northern littoral which we have never actually occupied were not so very long ago in the hands of native rulers, upon whose goodwill we could rely with much more confidence than on that of the Shah's satraps. Lingah, for instance, was governed by an hereditary sheikh, whose tribe—a branch of the Kowasim Arabs—had come across from the opposite coast, until the Persians seized him by a sudden *coup de main* in 1889, and having deported him to Teheran, installed in his place a deputy of the Governor of Bushire. In the same way the Government of Bunder Abbas and the adjoining coast had been since the end of the eighteenth century in the hands of the Sultan of Muscat, one

of the oldest allies of the British Power, but in 1868 Persia, who had been steadily undermining his authority for many years, took advantage of his troubles in Oman to deal the last blow and instal a Persian governor with a Persian garrison.

To the east and south-east of Bunder Abbas, outside the Persian Gulf, the Shah's sovereignty extends nominally all along the shores of the Gulf of Oman, including the important Bay of Chahbar, which is already freely talked of in Russia as the future terminus of a Russian railway to connect the Trans-Caspian and Central Asian railways through Eastern Persia with the open sea. Inland it extends also, through Persian Mekran and Persian Baluchistan, to the frontiers of our Indian Empire, which march with Persia from Kuh Malek-i-Siah, on the watershed of the Helmund, to the Bay of Gwettur, in the Indian Ocean. But what the Shah's sovereignty amounts to in those regions, or would amount to without our support, may be gathered from the fact that within the last three years two expeditions have had to be sent from British Baluchistan to help him police the country. The story of these two expeditions, which has passed almost unnoticed at home, is so significant and instructive that it deserves to be briefly recalled. A notorious outlaw and freebooter—Muhammed Umar Khan, a member of the powerful Nausherwani tribe, of whom Serdar Sir Nauroz Khan of Khoran is the head—fled a few years ago, in 1898, across the Persian border, after his grandfather, Mir Baluch Khan, whom he had joined in a rising against the Khan of Khelat, the ruling chief of the Baluchistan Protectorate, had been defeated and killed by a British force. Muhammed Umar Khan made his submission in the following year, but in 1900 he again fled to Persia, and

organised on Persian territory a series of raids into British Mekran, which culminated, in December, 1900, in a regular attack by a band of some 600 men on the village of Kantdar, which was taken and looted after a fight in which the villagers lost severely. Muhammed Umar and his men got back into Persia with plunder to the value of 80,000 rupees. Nearly the whole of his following on this occasion consisted of Persian subjects and refugees established on Persian territory between Irafshan and Sarhad, who were led by their own chiefs and received a share of the spoils. Altogether the damage done to our people by this raid was estimated at over one lakh and a quarter of rupees, and it became necessary to take some steps to bring home to the Persians their responsibility for allowing British territory to be harried with the aid of their own subjects from a secure base on Persian soil.

Major Showers, the Political Agent at Khelat, was therefore sent with an escort of 200 infantry and some sowars to march up from Gwattur to the Persian border and subsequently to Dizak, in Persian Mekran, where he met, in February, 1901, the Persian Deputy-Governor of Bampur, the nearest Persian town of any importance. This official had been engaged for nearly a month and a half in trying to subdue three small forts held by Muhammed Umar's people. But though he had two small guns, his nondescript following of Persian soldiers had made no impression upon them. Major Showers immediately made preparations to escalade them, but the rebels knew the difference between the Shah's soldiery and Anglo-Indian troops, and made haste to surrender. Unfortunately, the hot weather was already approaching. Major Showers and his men had a march of 480

miles before them back to Quetta, and the capture and punishment of Muhammed Umar and his chief adherents had to be postponed till the following year. The Persian Government was in the meantime invited to send a responsible official with the necessary force to meet a British expedition on the border and settle all matters in dispute. Vigorous action was obviously necessary, as Muhammed Umar soon reappeared on the scene. Two of his brothers seized the fort of Nodiz, near Turbat-i-Kej in Mekran, and though they were in turn invested by the Nazim of Mekran, who administers the country on behalf of the Khan of Khelat, with about 1,000 Brahui tribesmen, they held out until, towards the end of December, 1901, the Agent-General for Baluchistan, Colonel C. E. Yate, with Major Showers and a small force of 300 infantry of the 27th Baluch Regiment, fifty men of the Sind Horse, and two mountain guns under Major Tighe, arrived on the spot. The fort was at once stormed under Colonel Yate's orders, Muhammed Ali, one of Muhammed Umar's brothers, and seventeen of his men being killed, and the rest captured. It was a plucky feat of arms, and the effect was excellent. Mekran has remained quiet ever since. But there was still the source of all this trouble to be dealt with on the Persian side of the frontier. Major Showers proceeded with his force to Megas, where he met the Governor-General of Kerman with a Persian force of 700 infantry, 300 cavalry, a camel corps, and two small guns. It was then decided to carry on combined operations for the recovery of compensation for damage done by Muhammed Umar's raids into British territory; for the punishment of the chief leaders—certain Serdars of Megas, Sarhad, Sargo, and Irafshan; and for the capture, if possible,

of Muhammed Umar himself. It was also agreed that the forts on the Persian side of the border should be demolished, that certain important centres should be garrisoned by Persian troops, that shelter should no longer be given on Persian soil to outlaws flying from British territory, and that an annual meeting should take place between the Persian Deputy-Governor of Bampur and the Nazim of Mekran for the settlement of border cases and for concerted measures to restrict the importation of modern arms of precision. The combined forces then proceeded against the strong fort of Megas, which Serdar Shah Jehan was still holding. He quickly made his submission, and paid an indemnity of 18,000 rupees, and his fort was levelled to the ground. Irafshan was surprised after a long night march, and as the fort which is the principal residence of Muhammed Umar Khan is in a very difficult and strong position, it was handed over to the Persians to be permanently garrisoned. Muhammed Umar himself, unfortunately, eluded pursuit, but a move was made into the Damani country, further north in Sarhad, and several other chiefs submitted and paid, or engaged to pay, indemnities for the outstanding instalments of which the Persian authorities were to be responsible. By the end of April, 1902, Major Showers's force had marched back successfully to Quetta out of Persian Baluchistan over the Seistan trade route. As soon, however, as our backs were turned, the Persians allowed Muhammed Umar to depart unmolested across the Afghan border. They have now even withdrawn their garrison from Irafshan, and as the Persian authorities do nothing to check the importation of arms which are being regularly smuggled in on the coast of Mekran, especially from the other side of the Sea of Oman, the country will, no

doubt, before long become once more a hotbed of lawlessness, in which case the Indian Government will have to despatch another expedition to restore order in the territories of our good friend and loyal neighbour, the Shah, and to "save his face" we shall probably again invite him to send some of his ragamuffin regiments to "co-operate" with us.

Thus while her Russian neighbour in the North has during the last century wrested from Persia her Caucasian provinces, and banished her flag from the Caspian, we have persistently favoured the extension of her authority in the South, to the detriment, amongst other things, of our popularity with the people of the Gulf, who abhor her rule. The influence which Russia and Great Britain now respectively wield at Teheran affords a truly cynical illustration of the relative value of a policy of masterful treatment as against conciliatory forbearance in dealing with a corrupt and weak Oriental monarchy. The latest achievement of the Persian policy of centralisation in which we have so readily acquiesced has been the introduction into the Persian Gulf of a new Customs administration under foreign control, which is meant to be, and is, openly antagonistic to British interests.

If Turkey had emulated the example of Persia at an earlier date, the extension of the Sultan's authority on the opposite shores of the Gulf would doubtless have encountered equally little opposition. For when Midhat Pasha during his tenure of office as Governor-General of Baghdad in the early seventies began tentatively to assert the Sultan's sovereign rights along the littoral, we seem to have treated the matter with some indifference, though we recorded a formal protest against the occupation of the promontory of El Katr by the Turks

in response to the invitation of a lawless local sheikh, who found the engagements he had already contracted towards us to be too severe a strain upon his buccaneering propensities. At any rate, in the same year the Turks occupied El Katif and all the adjoining coastline to the north of Katar and, to consolidate their authority, founded a maritime Sandjak, or sub-governorship, with headquarters at El Hofuf, in the El Hasa district, under a new vali residing at Basra. The energies of the Porte were, however, soon afterwards absorbed by the crisis of the Russo-Turkish war, and it was not until 1884 that, for the second time, the erection of Basra into an independent vilayet gave the signal for a revival of Ottoman pretensions in the Persian Gulf. Though this measure coincided with the Pan-Islamic propaganda which the Sultan himself was directing against Great Britain from the palace at Constantinople, it attracted little attention at the time, but its effects were not slow to make themselves felt. The Turkish authorities, to say the least, winked at piracy and slave trading, and native dhows engaged in nefarious practices could always find a safe refuge in the small creeks and harbours where they were covered by the Ottoman flag. With the boldness bred of impunity a regular flotilla of pirate dhows was actually fitted out in 1895, on the so-called Turkish coast, to seize the important islands of Bahrein, the centre of the pearl fisheries of the Gulf, but a British gunboat appeared opportunely on the scene, and broke up the expedition in sight of the Turkish officers who were awaiting on the mainland the successful issue of the venture, in order to cross over and hoist the Sultan's flag. Since that episode the Turks have made no further attempt to interfere with the independence of the Sheikh of Bahrein, whose rights we guarantee under a

treaty concluded in 1861. How untoward were to be the consequences of the indifference with which Turkish pretensions in the Gulf were originally treated, few people realised until the Koweyt question imported into our local differences with Turkey international interests of a much wider bearing. I have already dealt at length with the complications to which that question has opened the door. It may at present be only a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, but such clouds are often in these latitudes the presage of severe storms.

To the south of the territory to which Turkey lays claim stretches the long line of coast which is still called the Pirate Coast, though now only in memory of the past. This was the scene of the severest struggles we fought as guardians of the peace of the Persian Gulf, and the loyalty to their engagements of the six Trucial chiefs who rule over the tribes we forcibly reclaimed from the wildest outlawry in the first half of the last century has borne testimony ever since to the efficiency of a beneficent but vigorous statesmanship. The whole series of engagements, beginning with the treaty of 1820, which was merely an initial attempt to restrain the chiefs from overt acts of piracy, down to the treaty of 1853, which imposed upon them perpetual maritime peace, and that of 1873, by which they undertook to prohibit altogether the traffic in slaves, deserves to be studied. For it forms a wonderful record of the perseverance, skill, and intelligence displayed by generations of devoted Anglo-Indian officials, whose names may be already forgotten, but whose work still endures.

Still more satisfactory are the relations of friendship we have maintained without any serious break for upwards of a century with the Sultans of Muscat, whose territory, facing Persian Mekran, commands the

western approach to the Gulf. The present Sultan is the most genial and intelligent of the Arab rulers I met in those regions, and he does not disguise the pleasure he takes in friendly intercourse with foreigners. He had been evidently much flattered by the Viceroy's invitation to the Delhi Durbar, and though he could not himself accept it, as the patriarchal administration of such states as his imposes upon the ruler a daily routine far more exacting than the government of more highly developed and far more powerful states, he did not hesitate to send his son, a youth of about seventeen, under the care of the British Resident, Major Cox, who, during his three years' tenure of the post, has gained his complete confidence.

The only other European power besides ourselves with whom the Sultan of Muscat has come into direct contact is France, who has had since 1862 a treaty under which she claims equality of treatment with Great Britain. But it was not until 1894 that, in response to pressure from the Colonial party in the Chamber, who openly urged the necessity of lending Russian influence in the Persian Gulf the support of French co-operation, a French Consul was appointed to reside at Muscat. This was soon followed by an attempt to obtain the grant of a coaling-station, which might easily have developed into a naval base, on the coast of Muscat, but the attempt failed, as it was bound to fail, since by a treaty concluded with us in 1892 the Sultan is pledged not to cede any part of his territory without our consent, and the lease of a small plot of ground inside Muscat Bay for the erection of a coal-shed has not quite reconciled the French to their failure. A still more serious question, because it has been a source of constantly recurring friction, is that of French

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protection for native craft. In a spirit hardly worthy of a great nation, the French have repeatedly insisted upon extending, even in Muscat waters, the protection of the French flag to a number of dhows from one of the old pirates' nests on the coast of Muscat, which, in the course of a more or less suspicious trade, have obtained "immatriculation" from the French authorities at Obok or Jibuti. These dhows are a thorn in the flesh to the Sultan, and he cannot understand how the British Government can tolerate, or the French Government encourage, a nuisance so flagrantly at variance with the professions of all European states concerning slave trade on the high seas. The question became very acute a few months after my visit to Muscat, when in April, 1903, some Arab mariners of Sur, on the coast of Oman, were arrested by the Sultan's officials for a breach of quarantine regulations and other lawless acts, and a dhow flying, it was alleged, the French tricolour was fired at. These people at once claimed French protection, and appealed to the French Consulate at Muscat. The French flagship *Infernet* was at once sent up to demand their release from the Sultan, who naturally contended that the French flag, even if his subjects had acquired the right to hoist it on the high seas, could not confer upon them immunity from the laws of Muscat in his own territory or within his own territorial waters. Happily the question had already for some time past formed the subject of friendly discussion between the British and French Governments, and this unpleasant incident served chiefly to bring home to both sides the urgency of a permanent settlement. No agreement could, however, be arrived at as to the principle which should govern such cases, and the matter has now been

referred to the Hague Court of Arbitration. The Sultan was, nevertheless, compelled in the meantime to release the prisoners before the expiration of their sentences, and they went back to Sur with all the appearances of a triumph over the authority of Muscat. The question is not one which merely affects the prestige of the Sultan. For these so-called French dhows, besides being often engaged in operations almost undistinguishable from slave trade, are continually smuggling arms of precision in very large numbers all along the coast, for the benefit of the inland tribes always in a state of more or less open warfare against the Sultan, and of all the outlaws generally on either shore of the Sea of Oman and of the Persian Gulf. But when I was at Muscat it was not to any point connected with his own difficulties that the Sultan chiefly addressed himself in the course of our conversation. The probing questions which he put to me with regard to Russian influence in Persia, German railway schemes, the situation at Koweyt, and the various recent manifestations of the growth of new foreign influences in the Persian Gulf, not only showed him to be observant and well informed, but they betrayed also the presence in his mind of the same anxieties with regard to the future — I might almost say the same sense of grave impending changes —which prevails to a greater or less degree amongst the whole native population of that region.

CHAPTER XXII

THE GUARDIANSHIP OF THE GULF

THAT the apprehensions with regard to the future which were shared by natives and Englishmen alike in Southern Persia and in the Gulf are groundless only the blindest optimism can maintain. There have, it is true, been as yet no such profound changes in the political situation in the South as those which have placed the North of Persia under the exclusive ascendency of Russia, but the consequences of those changes in the North are extending all over the South of Persia, and they are already making themselves felt even in the Persian Gulf. When I was for the first time in the Gulf, not yet twenty years ago, there was no sign of any foreign influence but ours. British influence was not only paramount, but it was unchallenged. To-day it is still predominant, but it no longer stands alone, and it is being openly challenged in more quarters than one. To the legitimate competition of foreign trade in the Persian Gulf, as elsewhere, no Englishman can, of course, take exception. But even if such nominally commercial ventures as the cruises of heavily subsidised Russian steamers can rank as legitimate competition, it is not commercial enterprise that chiefly prompts the various manifestations of foreign influence which the last few years have witnessed in the Persian Gulf.

French, German, and Russian Consuls have not been appointed to reside in Gulf ports, where they for the most part have practically neither nationals nor trade to protect, merely for the transaction of ordinary Consular business, nor is it for the promotion of commerce that their peripatetic activity is generally displayed on board a man-of-war. It is not for commercial purposes that the Russians have from time to time developed such abnormal interest in the sanitary condition of the Gulf as to send medical missions, assisted by military and naval officers, to Bushire and Bunder Abbas, nor that a French subject, acting as correspondent of Russian newspapers, conducts from Muscat, under shelter of extra territorial rights—which the French Consul is there to uphold—a systematic propaganda amongst the Arabs of the coast, by means of Arabic leaflets in which the British and the Sultan of Oman are jointly and severally traduced and vilified. It is not merely in the interests of trade that foreign men-of-war have been sent to cruise ostentatiously in the waters of the Gulf, and to show their flag to native chiefs who were hitherto quite content to know only the white ensign of the British Navy, nor are the recesses of the coast being explored with a view to the creation of merely commercial harbours. Concurrently with these and many other novel manifestations of the activity of the Continental Powers in the Gulf itself, diplomacy works on parallel lines at Constantinople and at Teheran. We could, perhaps, afford to treat with indifference the local influence of Turkey and of Persia on the littoral of the Gulf, so long as there was nothing more substantial than their own ambitions behind it, but now that Turkish policy in the Gulf is liable to be wire-pulled from Constantinople by Germany, and Persian policy

from Teheran by Russia, the action of the two states for whose assertion of territorial rights we have ourselves paved the way can no longer be regarded as a *quantité négligeable*. I have already alluded to the two first results—on the one hand, the aggressive attitude of the Turks in the neighbourhood of Koweyt, and on the other, the transfer of the Persian Customs in the Gulf to a foreign administration antagonistic to British interests. Other and more serious results can hardly fail to follow. Big railway schemes are being matured. The Germans still maintain that, in spite of our refusal to co-operate with them on the terms they "so generously" offered us, the Anatolian Railway will eventually be carried down to Baghdad and the Persian Gulf, and railways, at least in Asia, are, we know, supposed nowadays to carry with them the right to an open door on to the sea. Russia has already taken in hand such a vast programme of railway construction in Asia that she would prefer to postpone for the present any extension of her lines into Persia and down to the Gulf, and she has accordingly closed Persia against all foreign enterprise for a term which does not expire until 1905, and will doubtless be then renewed once more if she is not yet ready for action. But Germany, if she persists in carrying out her schemes of railway conquest from Asia Minor, may precipitate Russia's action there, as she did in the Far East by the seizure of Kiao-chau. Whether Russia has actually "ear-marked" Bunder Abbas or any other port in the Persian Gulf, or whether she has already come to the conclusion that Bunder Abbas would prove too hot, just as Vladivostok proved too cold, for her purpose, and that, upon the same principle upon which she claimed an ice-free port in the Pacific, she must insist here on having a port outside

the fiery furnace of the Gulf and open to the cool sea breezes of the Indian Ocean, there is very little room for doubt that, if Germany secures a place for herself in the fierce sunshine of the Gulf, Russia will be found fully armed with the Shah's authority to occupy any point she may have selected on the Persian littoral. The French, too, in such a contingency would certainly not be behindhand in discovering some eligible site for the naval station they failed to obtain four years ago on the coast of Muscat.

To the building of railways for genuine commercial purposes we need assuredly take no exception; nor to the opening of commercial ports as an outlet for such railways. But we have every reason to know, from recent experience in other parts of the world, what these peaceful enterprises are apt to develop into, and it is to be hoped we shall not again commit ourselves to premature acquiescence. / When Mr. Balfour admitted the reasonableness of Russia's desire for a warm-water port as an outlet for her great Siberian railway, he assuredly never contemplated the creation of a naval and military stronghold at Port Arthur as the terminus of an entirely new line of railway dominating Manchuria. Even those Englishmen who still put their faith in Germany, and would have us give the Sultan a free hand at Koweyt for the benefit of his good friend and brother the Emperor William, would hardly welcome the establishment of another Kiao-chau in the Persian Gulf. Yet the situation in the Persian Gulf when I visited it for the second time, towards the end of 1902, bore a striking resemblance to the situation in the Gulf of Pe-chi-li before Germany opened the ball by occupying Kiao-chau. There were, to a great extent, the same factors, the same features, the same symptoms

of an impending crisis which had been only too visible to those who had eyes to see in the Far East when Japan had once exposed the helplessness of China in the face of a restless world in search of new fields of commercial and political exploitation. There were the same rumours of secret treaties no less plausible in themselves, no less strongly corroborated by independent testimony. They elicited the same official denials, which were accepted with the same facile optimism. We talked then about the integrity and independence of the Chinese Empire, and the maintenance of the *status quo* in Far Eastern waters, just as we went on talking about the integrity and independence of Persia and the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Persian Gulf. Could any British Government, looking back upon the subsequent course of events in the Far East, contemplate with equanimity their reproduction in the Persian Gulf on the very threshold of our Indian Empire? I will say nothing about the commercial interests of India, though we know what measure of fair play they are likely to get under the political ascendency of our continental competitors, and especially of Russia, who has hermetically closed against Indian trade every successive market of which she has secured the control in Central Asia. For it is not our commercial supremacy only that would be challenged if other nations once gained a foothold in the Persian Gulf. The whole balance of naval and military power in this part of Asia would inevitably be affected, and we should have no Japan whom we could call in to redress it in our favour. To anyone who is at all intimately acquainted with international politics the idea that we could rely upon the appearance of Germany on the scene to act as a counterpoise to Russia must

seem quite as futile as that Russia's policy of expansion in Asia can be arrested by graceful concessions. India would for the first time for upwards of a century be exposed to attack from a naval base within close proximity to her shores, and though that is a danger against which she could be protected so long as we preserve our command of the sea, it would mean an additional task for our Navy and involve a substantial increase of the naval force permanently stationed in our Indian waters. Whatever the sequence in point of time, and whether the railway came before the port or the port before the railway, a Russian Port Arthur on the Persian Gulf would inevitably mean another Manchurian Railway through Eastern Persia, with all the consequences which such a railway involves; and in the course of a given number of years the whole line of land defences behind which India has entrenched herself at such enormous cost of treasure and labour would be turned, and her resources would have to be strained afresh to meet a new military situation far more complicated and threatening than any she has yet had to deal with. And I have suggested so far only the material effects upon our position in India. Might not the moral effect be more serious still if our Indian Empire were subjected to the immediate reaction of every international complication in which our world-wide interests must at times involve us?

It will be said, no doubt, that this is a highly-coloured picture. But is it an improbable or an impossible one? Does it not merely fill in, as it were, with some slight measure of topographical detail the rough sketch already drawn in outline by Captain Mahan from a purely scientific survey of the situation? He saw "the question of the Persian Gulf, and of South Persia in connection

with it . . . clearly visible on the horizon." He analysed it with his usual perspicacity, and as, on the broader issues it involves for an empire which rests as our own does upon sea-power, he writes with an authority I cannot venture to claim, I may be allowed to quote his own words :—

"By established rule and justice the determination [of rights and responsibilities] belongs primarily to those immediately on the spot, in actual possession. Unhappily the Powers that border the Persian Gulf—Persia itself, Turkey, and some minor Arabian communities—are unable to give either the commercial or military security that the situation will require. Under their tutelage alone, without stronger foundations underlying, stability cannot be maintained either by equilibrium or by predominance. In such circumstances, and when occasion arises, the responsibility naturally devolves, as for other derelicts of fortune, upon the next-of-kin, the nearest in place or interest. . . . Great Britain, in the clear failure of Turkey and Persia, is the nation first—that is, most—concerned. She is not so only in her own right, and that of her own people, but in the yet more binding one of Imperial obligation to a great and politically helpless ward of the Empire—to India and its teeming population. In her own right and duty she is, as regards the maintenance of order, in actual possession, having discharged this office to the Gulf for several generations. Doubtless, here as in Egypt, now that the constructive work has been done, she might find others who would willingly relieve her of the burden of maintenance; but as regards such transfer, the decision of acceptance would rest by general custom with the present possessor, and to her the question is one not merely of convenience but of duty, arising from and closely involved with existing conditions, which are the more imperative because they are plants of mature growth, with roots

deep struck and closely intertwined in the soil of a past history. These conditions are doubtless manifold, but in last analysis they are substantially three. First, her security in India, which would be materially affected by an adverse change in the political control of the Gulf; secondly, the safety of the great sea route, commercial and military, to India and the Farther East, on which British shipping is still actually the chief traveller, though with a notable diminution that demands national attention; and, thirdly, the economic and commercial welfare of India, which can act politically only through the Empire, a dependence which greatly enhances obligation. The control of the Persian Gulf by a foreign state of considerable naval potentiality, a fleet in being there based upon a strong military port, would reproduce the relations of Cadiz, Gibraltar, and Malta to the Mediterranean. It would flank all the routes to the Farther East, to India, and to Australia, the last two actually internal to the Empire regarded as a political system; and although at present Great Britain unquestionably would check such a fleet, so placed, by a division of her own, it might well require a detachment large enough to affect seriously the general strength of her naval position."

To this point, and on the lines thus laid down with so much authority by Captain Mahan, his Majesty's Government have addressed themselves, after perhaps an unnecessarily long period of hesitation, but with commendable determination. The declaration made by Lord Lansdowne on May 5th, 1903, marks an important stage in the question of the Gulf. In reply to a series of inquiries from Lord Lamington, the Secretary of State announced that "we [*i.e.* his Majesty's Government] should regard the establishment of a naval base or of a fortified port in the Persian Gulf by any other power as a very grave menace to

British interests which we should certainly resist with all the means at our disposal." That Lord Lansdowne should at the same time have intimated that he spoke in no minatory spirit, and that he was not aware of any proposals on foot for the establishment of a foreign naval base in the Gulf were, no doubt, merely oratorical precautions which did not, and were not meant to, detract from the emphatic warning his words conveyed to the world at large. The arguments by which he led up to his declaration of policy were equally sober and moderate. "It was owing to British enterprise, to the expenditure of British lives and money, that the Persian Gulf is at this moment open to the navigation of the world. It was our ships that cleared those waters of pirates; it was we who put down the slave trade; it was we who buoyed and beaconed those intricate waters." We had so far succeeded in preserving a liberal share of the commerce, and though we might feel very keenly the competition of other powers, and could perhaps scarcely hope always to maintain there or elsewhere the position of superiority we had acquired as the pioneers of commercial development throughout the world, and certainly could not aim at excluding the legitimate trade of other nations, he entirely agreed that "this country stands with regard to the navigation of the Gulf in a position different from that of any other power," and that "our policy should be directed to protect and promote British trade in those waters."

As far as it went it was an admirable exposition of our rights and obligations. Great Britain still holds a position of complete pre-eminence in the Persian Gulf. She holds it under the most honourable of title deeds, for it is none other than the reign of law and

order she has imposed, and for so many decades upheld by her own unaided efforts; to her own benefit no doubt, but equally to that of the discordant native races and tribes whom she has reclaimed from lawlessness to peaceful pursuits, and of the friendly nations of the world to whose peaceful enterprise she has thrown open an unrestricted field. In this sense Great Britain has made the Persian Gulf an open sea, and in this sense it will remain so under her guardianship. But her Imperial interests forbid her to leave it open to the territorial ambitions of other powers. The self-denying ordinance she has imposed upon herself in this respect she has the right to impose upon others, and the British Government have now given fair warning that we intend to impose it "with all the means at our disposal."

Nevertheless, the value of this declaration of policy, pregnant as it may and should be with important developments, is in itself negative rather than positive. It lays down what we shall not tolerate on the part of others. Even coupled with the explanations, satisfactory enough as far as they went, which Lord Lansdowne subsequently gave, of various measures which are occupying the attention of the Government in Southern Persia, it gives but an imperfect indication of what we ourselves ought to do. To quote Captain Mahan again, he tells us that for the Imperial purposes he has already enumerated as those we should steadily keep in view, "naval predominance in the Gulf unfettered by bases there belonging to possibly hostile foreign powers would be a factor of considerable influence." But, he goes on, "naval control is a very imperfect instrument unless supported and reinforced by the shores on which it acts. Its corollary, there-

fore, is to attach the inhabitants to the same interests by the extension and consolidation of commercial relations, the promotion of which consequently should be the aim of government. The acquisition of territory is one thing which may properly be rejected as probably inexpedient, and certainly unjust when not imperative. It is quite another matter to secure popular confidence and support by mutual usefulness. Whatever the merits of free trade as a system suited to these or those national circumstances, it probably carries with it a defect of its qualities in inducing too great apathy towards the exertion of governmental action in trade matters. Non-interference, *laissez-faire*, may easily degenerate from a conservative principle into an indolent attitude of mind, and then it is politically vicious."

In an even broader sense than that in which Captain Mahan wrote, his language describes with a rare faculty of intuition the fundamental weakness of our policy for many years past in and along the shores of the Gulf. We have tolerated the encroachments of the Porte and bolstered up the authority of Teheran without any guarantee that their authority would not be used to our detriment. We have produced among the native chiefs and tribes who regarded themselves as our clients the impression that their interests will in the long run always be sacrificed to the exigencies of some diplomatic bargain with the central government. With all our boasted wealth—wealth such as no other nation has ever had at its command—we have suffered a much poorer rival to monopolise the formidable power which financial indebtedness places in the hands of a masterful creditor, and to parade it in the shape of a foreign administration openly antagonistic to all British interests. We forgot all about the instability

of the treaty foundations upon which our trade with Persia rested until we suddenly awoke to find them totally undermined by the new Russo-Persian tariff. Whilst Russia was opening up new trade routes in the North, and creating and co-ordinating new forces towards the consolidation and extension of her political and commercial ascendency, the modest efforts of British private enterprise, and in some cases even the exhortations of British diplomacy on the spot, received but scant attention or encouragement at home, and no serious attempt was ever made to organise and develop systematically even the claims we had already pegged out in the past. We allowed ourselves to be hypnotised by the one comforting word *status quo* perpetually dinned into our ears, whilst it was rapidly coming to mean nothing more than a label on an empty bottle. Our action with regard to Koweyt and Lord Lansdowne's official declaration in the House of Lords, followed by the recent announcement that the Viceroy of India is about to visit the Persian Gulf, and will be met there by the British minister at Teheran, may, it must be hoped, be taken as indications that we are at length beginning to realise that the maintenance of a nominal *status quo* does not suffice to avert a radical and far-reaching transformation of the real *status quo*. To drift is not to swim, and we still have a hard swim before us against adverse currents if we are to recover the ground we have lost during two decades of idle drifting in the Persian Gulf.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FUTURE OF SEISTAN

TO one who has just travelled through Persia there is a special piquancy in the contrast which Quetta presents. Nature has fashioned in much the same mould the whole of the great plateau, intersected by lofty mountains, which rises, as it were, in broken terraces from the basin of the Tigris and Euphrates to the Roof of the World, and embraces Afghanistan, Baluchistan, and the North-West Provinces of India, as well as Central and Southern Persia. The arid plain in which Quetta lies at an altitude of 5,515 feet above the sea, the belt of precious vegetation which surrounds the settlement, and the amphitheatre of bare and rugged mountains clothed with deep snow throughout the winter, which frames the picture, present all the familiar features of a Persian landscape. But there the likeness ends. There is nothing Persian about the broad, well-kept roads bordered with leafy avenues, the trim bungalows, each standing in its own carefully tended garden, the spacious cantonments laid out in symmetrical lines of camp and barracks, the busy railway station upon which two lines converge from the plains of Sind, both in their way a triumph of engineering skill and audacity, the one up the Bolan Pass with gradients of one in twenty-four, and the other through the Chappar Rift,

as forbidding a defile, cleft through three miles of perpendicular cliffs, as has ever echoed with the shrill whistle of the locomotive. There is nothing Persian about the stalwart Baluch and Pathan tribesmen whom twenty years of strong and intelligent government by a handful of British administrators have gone far to redeem from lawlessness without impairing their martial qualities. There is nothing Persian about the combined energy and patience which, within little more than twenty-five years, have converted this remote and inhospitable corner of India into one of the chief bulwarks of our Empire. Quetta, with its northern outpost at Chaman projecting across the Khwaja Amran range into the plain of Kandahar, is now one of the great strategical positions of the world, and nothing appears to have been left undone which modern military science could achieve to add to its natural strength.

But there is no finality to the problems of Empire. When, after a period of costly hesitation, it was decided to retain and fortify the Quetta position, the policy which prompted this decision was based solely upon considerations connected with Afghanistan and the great military Power which was already pressing upon it from the North. Persia still preserved, at any rate, some outward semblance of power, and the Persian provinces of Khorasan and Seistan covered the western flank of Afghanistan, while the Shah's authority in Persian Baluchistan was much too slender to hamper the consolidation of British influence in the adjoining territories of British and British-protected Baluchistan. It is only within the last decade that Russian activity in Eastern Persia, assisted by Russian ascendency at Teheran, has forcibly drawn attention to other possible avenues of hostile approach towards our Indian Empire

THE AFGHAN FORT OF BALDAK SPIN, FROM CHAMAN (p. 338)

Face p. 270

than those which lie through the Afghan passes. The Russification of Khorasan may be said to have begun in earnest in 1889 with the appointment of a Russian Consul-General at Meshed, and though it will probably not be completed until Russia has connected her Trans-Caspian Railway from Ashkabad with Meshed, her influence was already in 1895 so firmly established in the province that she had no hesitation in revealing the ulterior objects of her policy by issuing a Customs tariff which was intended to kill the considerable Indian and British trade which had hitherto been carried on with her Trans-Caspian provinces through Khorasan. The new tariff prohibited the importation of all British or Indian goods except a few articles which Russia herself does not produce, such as tea and indigo, and even these were severely penalised. This was the preliminary step to the commercial as well as political conquest of Khorasan, and there were ample indications that Russia did not intend to confine her operations to Northern Khorasan, but was bent upon extending them to Seistan, which, for administrative purposes, forms the southern part of Khorasan, though it is geographically a separate district. At first only Russian agents of the approved "unofficial" type were employed in Seistan, and surveys of the country south of Meshed to our Baluch border were carried on by "scientific" missions. Later on these "unofficial" agencies were superseded, or rather supplemented, by recognised official agencies. A Russian Vice-Consulate under the orders of Meshed was established at Nasretabad, the administrative capital of Seistan, and "plague" missions, of which more anon, made their appearance escorted by Russian officers and Cossacks. "Complimentary" missions, like that of the Russian Consul-General at

Meshed in 1899 to Kain, with a cargo of valuable presents to the Khan, impressed in turn upon the different members of the old ruling family the generosity as well as the might of Russia, whilst at Teheran the Persian Government was being encouraged to strengthen its administrative grip of Seistan.

Anyone who takes the trouble to refer to a map can see for himself at a glance the importance of the position occupied by the Persian province of Seistan. It lies about midway north and south between the point where the frontiers of Russia, Persia, and Afghanistan now meet at Zulfikar and that where the frontiers of Persia and of our Indian Empire meet on the open sea at Gwattur—*i.e.* about 300 miles separate the northern border of Seistan from the Russian frontier, and about 300 miles again separate its southern border from the Indian Ocean. It marches on its eastern border with Afghanistan and with Baluchistan. It commands the valley of the Helmund, and with it the road from Herat to Kandahar. It has an area estimated at 950 square miles, with a mixed population—Persian, Afghan, and Baluch—of barely 100,000 souls; and, unlike the greater part of Eastern Persia, a very large proportion of this area consists of rich alluvial soil deposited in the course of centuries by the Helmund. Its immense resources as a wheat-producing region have been only partially developed under Persian misrule, but with an extended system of irrigation, for which the Helmund affords an ample supply of water, it would soon recover, in the hands of any civilised power, its ancient place as one of the chief granaries of Central Asia. It is not, therefore, surprising that the enterprising pioneers of Russian expansion should have speedily realised the rare com-

bination of strategic and economic advantages offered by Seistan in the present position of affairs on the Asiatic chess-board. Fortunately it had also not altogether escaped the attention of the Indian Government; for we have been more or less closely associated with the history of Seistan since the middle of the last century.

The establishment of Persian authority in Seistan has followed much the same course as I have already had occasion to describe in connection with other outlying parts of the Shah's dominions. A feud breaks out amongst the members of the local ruling family, who have hitherto enjoyed almost absolute independence. One of them, hard pressed in the struggle for power, appeals to Teheran for support, and purchases the material assistance required to turn the scales in his favour, unless or until a rival suitor outbids him. Once Persian influence has thus gained a foothold, the resourceful diplomacy of Teheran, made up in equal parts of treachery and corruption, never fails to find fresh opportunities of playing upon tribal jealousies and family dissensions, until the power of the nominal chief has been reduced to a mere shadow and the last remnants of self-government surrendered in return for a continuance of the Shah's favour. This process has already reached an advanced stage in Seistan. It is administratively a subdivision of the district of Kain. Mir Alam Khan, the Ameer of Kain, who died in 1891, was still a local chieftain of considerable power, though the Persian Government had already obtained a good price for its intervention against the Afghans. Upon his death his three sons naturally quarrelled over his inheritance, and Teheran composed their differences by recognising the eldest son as Governor of Seistan

under the title of Hashmet-ul-Mulk, the second son as Governor of Birjand under the title of Shaukat-ul-Mulk, and the third son as Sartip, or honorary Commander-in-Chief of Kain. The Hashmet-ul-Mulk, however, preferred at first to delegate his authority to his second son, Mir Masum Khan, who was sent, a mere lad, to reside at Nasretabad as Deputy-Governor of Seistan under the tutelage of his mother, a Baluch lady of good family and considerable ambition. But Mir Masum failed to retain the good graces of his father, who suspected him of intriguing with the Shaukat-ul-Mulk, and in 1898 his elder brother, Muhammed Riza Khan, appeared on the scene with a warrant to supersede him. Mir Masum Khan was for some time recalcitrant, but ultimately had to give way, and Muhammed Riza Khan ruled in his stead, until Hashmet-ul-Mulk came this year to take over the reins of government himself, as far as the increasing pressure of Teheran, backed by Russian influence, has left him any of the substantial attributes of power. In Seistan, as at Muhammerah and other places in the Persian Gulf, the latest blow to the prestige and power of the local ruler has been the importation of the Belgian Customs Administration, which has taken over control of one of the chief sources of revenue.

Persian Seistan comprises only half of the region commonly designated as Seistan. The other half lies to the east of the Helmund, and forms part of the dominions of the Ameer of Afghanistan. The possession of Seistan—the land of the Scythians, the favourite haunt of Nimrod the mighty hunter, the legendary birthplace of the heroic Rustum—has been at various periods a bone of sanguinary contention between Persians and Afghans. After the death of Nadir

Shah, who had added it to his many conquests, it was absorbed in the Durani Empire, which Ahmed Shah Abdali founded in Afghanistan, and upon the disruption of the Durani dominion it continued throughout the first half of the nineteenth century to own allegiance to Afghan rulers, sometimes at Kandahar, and sometimes at Herat. It was not till the middle of the last century that Persia, taking advantage of internal dissensions in Afghanistan, attempted to revive her claims to Seistan. It is difficult to realise to-day that less than fifty years ago Persia was still capable of successful aggression in any direction, and especially against so warlike a race as the Afghans. But it was, it will be remembered, a Persian expedition against Herat which brought about a rupture between Great Britain and Persia at the end of 1856, and though, as the result of our occupation of Bushire and the Karun valley, the Persian Government undertook, by the treaty of peace which was signed in Paris in the following spring, to refrain from all future interference in the affairs of Afghanistan, Western Seistan was before long reoccupied by Persian troops. Years of diplomatic wrangling ensued, and the British Government of the day, though invited in turn by both parties to discharge its obligations under the Paris treaty and lend its friendly offices for the adjustment of the difference, preferred to shirk its responsibilities, and it was only the imminence of actual hostilities between Persia and Afghanistan which at last induced Lord Clarendon to undertake arbitration, and appoint Sir F. Goldsmid to proceed in 1870 to the spot for the demarcation of a definite boundary. The Goldsmid Mission, despatched under the direct orders of the British Foreign Office, was, it must be confessed, but very imperfectly organised

for its work. The staff was small; its escort consisted only of a couple of *gholams* from the British Legation at Teheran and a few ragged Persian soldiers, and worst of all, its technical equipment was altogether inadequate. The late Sir Murdoch Smith, Director-General of the Indian Telegraphs in Persia, had, at the last moment, to lend one of his officers as surveyor, no provision having been made in London for topographical work, although the country to be dealt with was still practically unmapped. But Captain Lovett, R.E., who was detached for this duty, had to proceed in such haste to join Sir Frederic Goldsmid that there was no time to secure assistance from the Survey Department of India, and he actually started with nothing more than a sextant and a prismatic compass. Such was at that time the confidence we reposed in the friendship of Persia that it is impossible to say what the consequences would have been had not Lord Mayo insisted upon sending a high official from India to join Sir Frederic Goldsmid and the Persian Commissioners on the Helmund and back up the Afghan Commissioners. The Persians professed deep resentment at this interference of the Indian Government, and it was no doubt in order to appease them that, in the final settlement, the course of the Helmund was adopted for a considerable distance as the boundary between Persia and Afghanistan, without any provision for the contingency of future changes in the main channel of that erratic river, though the surveyor to the Mission pointed out that it had already shifted its bed in the past, and might therefore do so again in the future. On the other hand, to satisfy the Afghans, the southern boundary of Afghan Seistan was ultimately drawn without any regard for the future

interests of Baluchistan. No doubt at that time our position in Baluchistan was not what it is to-day, and the triangular strip of territory between the Kuh Malik-i-Siah and the Helmund, which was awarded to Afghanistan, was then regarded as a no-man's-land of little actual value or prospective importance. But even at that time it might perhaps have been foreseen that upon the possession of the big bend of the Helmund with Bund-i-Khemal-Khan must depend the restoration of Seistan to its former prosperity, as though the old irrigation works were chiefly situated in what was recognised to be Persian Seistan, the control of the upper course of the river would always be of vital importance for regulating the flow of its waters, and averting the danger of floods by escape channels, and of drought by judicious storage. After nearly two years of weary wrangling Sir Frederic Goldsmid retired to Teheran, and there gave his arbitral award by which the Perso-Afghan frontier was drawn from the north-eastern boundary of the Persian district of Nehbandan along the southern fringe of the Naizar to the left bank of the Helmund, thence up the river to a point a mile above the great *bund* or dam at Kohak, and finally in a straight line south-west from that point on the river to the Kuh Malik-i-Siah. The result, which even the Shah was very reluctant to ratify, gave satisfaction to neither party, and the Afghans especially resented, not without some reason, that Persia should have been held by the British Commissioner to have acquired a prescriptive title to the western and wealthier half of Seistan in virtue, as they believed, only of a long term of unlawful occupation against which they had constantly protested, and which was in itself a breach of Persia's treaty engagements towards Great Britain.

If Sir Frederic Goldsmid's award had only produced some heart-burning at the time the mischief would have been slight. But, unfortunately, it contained also the seeds of much trouble in the future. The Helmund, like most rivers in that part of the world, frequently shifts its bed, and has stubbornly refused to acquiesce in the decision of the British Commissioner that the old bed which he had assigned as the boundary between Persia and Afghanistan was its true bed. In such a country the existence of the people depends upon water, and as the Helmund shifted over towards Persian territory, the Afghans no doubt clung to its right bank without much regard for boundary lines drawn on paper in defiance of nature. At any rate the Persians have repeatedly complained of Afghan encroachments, and in 1902, which was a year of quite exceptional drought, they charged the Afghans with having deliberately tampered with the upper waters of the river to the prejudice of Persian Seistan, and again invoked the arbitration of Great Britain under Article VI. of the Anglo-Persian Treaty of 1856. The Ameer of Afghanistan acquiesced, and at the end of December, 1902, the Indian Government despatched a commission under Major McMahon to investigate the disputes on the spot and effect a fresh settlement. This Commission was organised on a very different scale from that of Sir Frederic Goldsmid's. Captain McMahon took with him, in addition to a carefully selected staff of European officers and native officials with special local knowledge, an escort consisting of a squadron of Sind Horse, a detachment of the 24th Baluch Regiment, and a Maxim gun. The Indian Government realised that, in the altered condition of things in Persia, a more imposing pre-

sence than the Goldsmid Mission had been able to make would be necessary to overcome the improved methods of Persian obstruction combined with other and more powerfully hostile influences in the background. On the other hand, not only had the extension of British authority over Baluchistan brought home to the Indian Government during the thirty years which intervened between the Goldsmid and the McMahon Missions the growing importance of Seistan, but very effectual steps had recently been taken to create the necessary facilities of access to it.

It was in 1896 that, in order to meet the growing competition of Russia in North-Eastern Persia, and to parry to some extent the blow dealt at our Indian trade by the prohibitive character of the new Trans-Caspian tariff, the Indian Government decided to open up a direct trade route between Quetta and Seistan along the Baluch side of the Afghan border. Colonel C. E. Yate, the present agent to the Governor-General in Baluchistan, and Captain Webb Ware had in turn visited Seistan on official missions, and reported very strongly in favour of that route. Some preliminary difficulties had already been cleared away by the assignment of the Chazai district to the British sphere under the Durand Agreement of 1893 with the Ameer of Afghanistan and the subsequent delimitation of the Baluch-Afghan boundary by Major McMahon, while in 1896 Sir T. Holdich carried out, as far as a hasty survey of the country could allow, the delimitation of the Perso-Baluch frontier from Kuhak northwards to the Malek Siah Kuh, where it joins the Afghan boundary. Captain Webb Ware, an officer of Australian birth, whose ability and indomitable energy are a credit to the young Commonwealth, was placed in charge of the

new route, and the success which it has already achieved has fully justified his most sanguine estimates against the pessimism of adverse critics, who croaked about the waterless deserts to be traversed, the intolerable heat of the summer, and the bitter cold of the winter, which no caravans would dare to face.

The distance from Quetta to the Seistan border at Killa Robat along the route which has now been adopted is 465 miles, divided into twenty-one stages. The first five stages out of Quetta down to Nushki, a distance of ninety-three miles, are through a mountainous country, but after this first descent of 2,000 feet from the plateau of Quetta on to the great tableland which stretches away into Seistan at the same altitude throughout of about 3,000 feet, the road is a dead level and admirably adapted, at least, for camel traffic. Fortified posts, with *dâk* bungalows and *chappar khanehs* suitably equipped for the accommodation of travellers and merchants of all classes accompanying the caravans, have been erected at the different stages. Wells have been sunk at sufficient intervals to overcome the main difficulties with regard to water supply, and between Nushki and Killa Robat a *kutcha* road, varying in breadth from ten feet to twenty feet, has been laid out, which enables a bi-weekly *dâk* to be run through in six and a half days from Quetta to Nasretabad, the capital of Seistan, 100 miles beyond the Perso-Baluch frontier. In the first year the trade only amounted to one lakh and a half of rupees. In the second year, 1897–8 (the year is reckoned from April 1), it rose to nearly six lakhs, and then in successive years to seven, twelve, and fifteen lakhs, and for the year which ended on April 1, 1902, for which the official figures have not yet been pub-

lished, a further considerable increase was anticipated. Since then there has been a set-back owing to the terrible drought, unprecedented within the memory of living man, which has prevailed throughout Baluchistan, Afghanistan, and Eastern Persia, but the depression can be merely temporary, as the route has already made its reputation amongst native merchants, and several Indian firms have definitely established themselves in Seistan. Many Indian Muhammedans of the Shiah persuasion now travel by this route on pilgrimage to the shrine of Imam Reza at Meshed. Even the Afghan merchants of Herat have begun to use it largely for their Indian trade, whilst the export of tea to Persia by this overland route, which does not affect its aroma as does the journey in the moist heat of the Persian Gulf, has shown such profits that several important tea associations have despatched representatives from India to study the requirements of the new markets thus thrown open to them. Wool, almonds, and other dried fruits, asafœtida, and *ghee* (clarified butter) in very large quantities, form the bulk of the export trade from Seistan, whilst English broadcloth, Indian sheetings, tea, indigo, and hardware are the chief exports on our side. But the trade which shows perhaps most conclusively how exaggerated were the apprehensions entertained with regard to the climate and water supply is that which has sprung up in horses, mules, and even sheep. Persian horses have come into Quetta in excellent condition and realised handsome profits, whilst Baluch camels for breeding purposes have been in request on the Seistan side.

The prospects of the route are in fact so well assured that the Indian Government, which had already acquired in 1899 a lease of the Nushki district at a perpetual quit

rent of 9,000 rupees from the Khan of Khelat, who rules over the British Protectorate of Baluchistan, considered itself justified in 1902 in sanctioning the construction of a railway from Quetta to Nushki, and the work has already been taken in hand. The difficulties it presents are not formidable, though it will have to cross three distinct ranges of hills, over the furthest of which there is a sharp drop of nearly 2,000 feet to the level of Nushki. The line which branches off from the main line to Quetta above the Bolan Pass near Spezand Station, about sixteen miles short of Quetta, will, it is expected, be terminated in the course of two years at a cost which should not exceed £500,000, and its completion cannot fail to give a great impetus to the trade. For Nushki, which is surrounded by good grazing land for camels, is a much better starting-point for caravans than Quetta, while the beasts of burden will be spared the trying march over the mountains at the beginning or at the end respectively of the long journey to and from Seistan. Whether the railway will be ultimately carried further along the Baluch frontier or ever reach Seistan must depend upon a number of circumstances which it would be premature to forecast. Should its prolongation be at any time deemed desirable, there will certainly be no physical difficulties in the way. From Nushki to the Persian frontier there is an unbroken plain, and carriages have already passed over it with ease.

Thus when Captain McMahon's mission sallied forth from Quetta in the last days of December, 1902, it was able to march with all its impedimenta within a month and without any serious difficulties to the Persian frontier. In 1870 Sir Frederic Goldsmid had had to make his way as best he could, and as it were

incognito through Northern Persia to Seistan under convoy of a few Persian *tufenkjis*. In 1903, thanks to the foresight and energy of the Indian Government, the McMahon Mission entered Seistan direct from the great military outpost of our Indian Empire with a picked escort sufficient, at least, to secure respect for Great Britain's arbitral power in a region of growing importance to our Imperial interests.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE RUSSIAN POSITION IN EASTERN PERSIA

THE McMahon Mission to Seistan came none too soon to uphold our interests in a region where Russia had specially applied herself to defeat them. Had we failed to vindicate our position as the arbitral power between Persia and Afghanistan on the banks of the Helmund, not only would Kabul and Teheran have each drawn its own inferences from such an avowal of impotency, but the new trade route we have opened up between Quetta and Eastern Persia would have been doomed at no distant date to practical extinction. Its success up to the present has been achieved in the face of very peculiar difficulties. I have spoken so far only of the physical difficulties, which have not, on the whole, proved so serious as was anticipated. But it has encountered in other respects difficulties which could hardly have been foreseen, in the shape of political opposition so bitterly and deliberately hostile as to be almost without precedent in the relations of two nominally friendly powers.

Nowhere in Persia has Russian influence been so unscrupulously exerted as in Seistan for the purpose of closing the country to the legitimate exercise of our trading rights. The Belgian Customs administration has been mobilised to organise on scientific lines the

by no means despicable forces of Persian official obstruction. Whereas one Belgian official is apparently competent to deal with the large Russo-Persian trade of Meshed, it has been considered necessary to send no fewer than three members of the Belgian staff to deal with the relatively small beginnings of Indo-Persian trade in Seistan. They have, it must be admitted, found ample occupation for themselves in devising novel methods for the discouragement of trade. On the flimsiest pretexts the traders who accompany the Quetta caravans have been fined for the non-observance of arbitrary regulations carefully varied to provoke confusion; the camel-drivers have seen their animals seized; they themselves were thrown into prison. High-handed action of this kind cannot be openly upheld. The cases are referred to Teheran, and I have no doubt M. Naus in due course apologises profusely to Sir Arthur Hardinge for the shortcomings of a new administration, for the excessive zeal of individual subordinates, etc. But, in the meantime, the desired effect is produced on the spot. The caravans are scared, native confidence in our ability to protect our own people is shaken, and no little trouble has to be expended in counteracting the effect of these unpleasant stories in the bazaars of Nushki and Quetta. But however resourceful the Belgian Customs and their Persian coadjutors have proved under the inspiration of M. Miller, the enterprising Russian Consul in Seistan, they have succeeded only in hampering, not in preventing, the expansion of Indian trade. To reinforce the Customs, which form, as it were, their first fighting line, the Russians have therefore established a second one consisting of plague officers. The excuse is that the importation of Indian goods might

introduce the plague into Khorasan and thence into the Russian dominions in Central Asia. It is true that the period of possible incubation has expired long before a caravan from Quetta can reach the borders of Seistan, and that the limits of time within which quarantine is permissible have been laid down by the decisions of the Venice Sanitary Congress to which Russia is a party, but it is a far cry from Venice to Khorasan. So in the rear of the Customs cordon the Russians have established a strong quarantine cordon between Seistan and Northern Khorasan. Its headquarters are at Turbat-i-Haidari and Karez, where on Persian soil Russian military doctors, supported by Russian officers and Russian Cossacks, and assisted by flying parties of Persian Cossacks, detached from Russian headquarters at Teheran, administer their own laws against the importation of Indian plague and other Indian commodities in utter disregard of all international usage. These measures appear to be directed more especially towards checking the development of our trade through Seistan with Northern Afghanistan, and driving the Herat merchants into the Penjdeh market, which they have not hitherto patronised to the satisfaction of their Russian neighbours. The British Government appear, however, to have at last recognised the necessity of protecting our traders against such systematic vexation. Lord Cranborne admitted last July in the course of a debate in the House of Commons that the Russian quarantine cordon was a matter, interfering as it did with British trade from India, of which his Majesty's Government had every right to complain, and added that they had not neglected making representations in the proper quarter in order to have that grievance abated; and

RUSSIAN OFFICIAL TRAVELLING WITH AN ESCORT OF PERSIAN COSSACKS

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it may be hoped that the presence of the McMahon Mission in Seistan may help our diplomatic protests at Teheran and St. Petersburg to materialise more effectually on the spot than has hitherto been the case.

It would be idle to pretend that these are questions which affect merely Anglo-Indian trade with Eastern Persia. However keen the Russians have shown themselves under the energetic impulse of M. Witte to prosecute the commercial conquest of Persia under cover of their political ascendency, it may be doubted whether political considerations have not played a larger part than commercial ones in stimulating their activity in Northern Khorasan and Seistan. The apathy with which British interests have been defended in other parts of Persia had, perhaps, left them unprepared for the energy which the Indian Government has displayed in this direction, and they resent it all the more keenly. The unanimous outburst of ill-humour to which the Russian Press gave vent when it was announced that the Indian Government proposed to build a railway down to Nushki, entirely within our own territory and some 400 miles away from the Persian border, disclosed the nature of the aspirations entertained in other and much more responsible quarters in Russia. Even if the line were prolonged right up to the frontiers of Seistan, Russia would have no more reasonable grounds for objection than we had when she prolonged her Trans-Caspian line down to the frontiers of Afghanistan at Kushk. In fact, if there were any sincerity in the professions to which utterance is sometimes given in Russia of a desire to see the Russian and Indian railway systems linked up through Afghanistan, she ought to welcome the construction of a line which might ultimately be connected through Khorasan with

her Trans-Caspian line without opening up the delicate political questions to which any interference with Afghanistan must always give rise. But Seistan lies across the easiest and shortest line of Russian advance to the Indian Ocean, and though, or because, she is probably not yet prepared for such an advance—the engagement she has compelled Persia to prolong until 1905 that no railways are to be built upon Persian territory till the expiry of that term is a proof of her own unpreparedness—she watches, with an apprehension she is unable to disguise, any indication that the important part which Seistan must play in the future developments of Central Asian politics has been realised in other quarters besides St. Petersburg.

In dealing with the Persian Gulf I have endeavoured to show how largely the interests of India are concerned in the maintenance of the undivided control we have exercised for upwards of a century over its waters, and in the exclusion from its shores of territorial ambitions, which would convert it into a cock-pit of international strife. The same considerations apply scarcely less forcibly to the question of the future of Seistan, for the chief value of Seistan to Russia, and the only one that can explain the effort she is making to secure her ascendency there, is as a stepping-stone in her advance towards the Indian Ocean. Seistan alone, amidst the wildernesses of Eastern Persia, would afford her, in virtue of its natural resources and of its geographical position, a tempting field for economic and political expansion, as well as an admirable strategic base for future military operations. Seistan lies midway athwart the track of the shortest line which could be built to connect the Trans-Caspian Railway with the Indian Ocean, and there is little doubt that the surveys

have already been completed for the extension, at least into Seistan, of the railway Russia has determined to build from Ashkabad to Meshed, as soon as she has carried out the extensive programme of railway construction that at present absorbs her energies in other parts of Asia. Pending the expiry of the unprecedented railway agreement by which she has in the meantime excluded any possible rivals from the field of railway construction in Persia, she spares no effort to place her ascendency beyond dispute in the regions in which she is pegging out her claims. The commercial policy of absolute exclusion which Russia has pursued throughout Central Asia towards British, and especially towards British-Indian, trade, and which she is at present pursuing with relentless energy in Persia, entirely precludes the idea that Russian railway schemes in this part of the world are conceived in the interests of international trade or for any purely mercantile purposes. Even more than in China, where the Manchurian Railway at least traverses rich and populous provinces, they would serve—in Eastern Persia above all—as an instrument of political domination. What the construction of another "Manchurian" railway into Seistan, with its ultimate extension to some new Port Arthur on the seas adjacent to our Indian Empire, would mean to India it seems incredible that so many politicians at home should still ignore, and, above all, those who habitually inveigh against the military burdens imposed upon the people of India. For it is not too much to say that the construction of such a railway, with all the political and military consequences it must involve, would revolutionise at once the conditions upon which our whole system of Indian defence has been built up.

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It is right to recognise, as all reasonable Englishmen are willing to do, that the gradual extension of Russia's power in Central Asia has been frequently determined quite as much by the irresistible forces which seem to compel every power representing a higher plane of civilisation to absorb the weaker or decaying communities of the East with which it comes into contact as by any settled and comprehensive scheme of conquest. But it is necessary also to recognise that the extension of her power has already seriously affected the position of our Indian Empire, and that its further extension might have still graver results. Without going back further than the last two decades, it is obviously the rapid growth of Russia's power in Asia which has alone compelled India to carry out a vast and costly scheme of defensive armaments on her north-west frontier. These armaments no more imply any undue suspicion of Russia than is displayed in the elaborate system of defences with which the frontiers of all the great Continental Powers bristle, more than ever to-day, in Europe. We have not yet reached the millennium, and however honestly desirous of peace all the most powerful rulers of the civilised world may be, none of them has yet ventured to disregard the possibility of war and the necessity of being prepared for it; and the experience of the last few years should at least have taught us how futile it is to rely upon the goodwill of other nations with whom we have far less numerous points of friction than with Russia.

A further extension of Russia's power through Eastern Persia towards British Baluchistan and the Indian Ocean or Persian Gulf would not diminish the necessity of precautionary measures for preserving the security

of our Indian Empire, but on the contrary, it would enormously enhance it. For our present lines of land defence in India have been laid out on the assumption that, as the north-eastern section of the Indian frontier is protected by a natural barrier of eternal snows, so the western section is covered by a friendly, or at least independent, Persia—herself incapable of aggressive military action. The vulnerable section has therefore been considered to lie only in the north-west, where from times immemorial the tide of conquest from the North has flowed down through the Afghan passes into the plains of Hindustan. Since the close of the last Afghan war all the energies of our statesmen and all the skill of our strategists have been devoted to building up in the rear of a friendly Afghanistan a series of impregnable positions which should guarantee at the same time the maintenance of the Afghan State and the safety of India from invasion. With this sole end in view, our diplomacy has laboured ceaselessly to restore the confidence of Afghan rulers in the sincerity of our goodwill, and to subdue and convert into an element of strength the fighting qualities of the turbulent frontier tribes, whilst, on the other hand, millions have been poured out in strengthening the natural bulwarks of our mountain boundary with all the modern resources of military science. It would be difficult to compute exactly the amount that has been spent in the construction of fortifications and military posts, of strategic railways and roads, of barracks and cantonments, in the creation of new tribal levies, in the maintenance of native and British garrisons, in the pacification and political administration of the inhospitable country which stretches in a succession of rugged valleys and precipitous ranges from Quetta to

Peshawar; but it unquestionably runs into scores of millions sterling.

Let Russia be established in Persia by the methods with which she has made us familiar in Manchuria, thus impinging upon the western frontiers of Afghanistan and Baluchistan, and the flank of the whole position upon which we now rely would be turned, and India exposed to attack along a wholly new line of frontier much more difficult of protection. The creation of a new corresponding line of defence on a border possessing few of the initial advantages with which nature has endowed the north-west frontier would subject the military and financial resources of India to a strain which would probably prove intolerable, even if we were justified in imposing it. The development of India is reaching a stage in which, if we have the interests of her people at heart, as we profess to do, we shall have to sanction the application of a larger proportion of her financial resources than has hitherto been the case to the advancement of her agriculture, to the promotion of her industries, to improved methods of education, to administrative reforms, in fact, to all the needs of a community which is rising in the scale of civilisation. Is it just at this stage that British statesmen can contemplate with indifference the creation of a new and, at least potentially, dangerous situation outside her frontiers, which would cripple her exchequer and hamper all progress? Or, if they contend that the voice of India in this case must be overruled by still more imperious considerations of general policy, are they prepared to accept on behalf of the Imperial Exchequer a legitimate proportion of the increased financial burden thus thrust upon India?

No doubt, though the cost would be enormous, it

might not be beyond the resources of the British Empire to secure the safety of India even if the whole of Persia, from Khorasan to the southernmost limits of Persian Baluchistan, were to pass to-morrow into the hands of Russia. But the cost could not be computed in terms of money alone. The whole machinery of British rule in India rests upon a delicate adjustment of forces which, in the absence of any abnormal outside pressure, has hitherto worked with marvellous efficiency. Take, for instance, one particular province—British Baluchistan, including the Protectorate. The whole of that province, with an area equal to that of France or Germany, is administered by a dozen European officials. It is the moral influence of this handful of Englishmen, backed, of course, by an element of physical force always in reserve, which keeps the peace amongst a scattered population of about 1,000,000 hardy and warlike tribesmen as naturally prone to lawlessness as any primitive race must be that has been accustomed for centuries to fight out its blood feuds from father to son without let or hindrance. But would these people continue to bow passively to the authority of the British *raj*, whose hand, they know, can be heavy as well as just, if there were another foreign *raj* established over the border whose power seemed to rival our own and would inevitably be invoked as a possible counterpoise to it? Is there not some significance in the announcement solemnly made only the other day by the official *Trans-Caspian Review* that eight Baluch chiefs had arrived at Ashkabad to invoke the protection of Russia against the oppressive acts of the Indian Government? Doubtless these are some of the outlaws against whom Colonel Yate's expedition into Persian Mekran was directed

last year, and we can afford at present to laugh at their appeal to the Russian authorities. But should we be able to laugh as easily if those same Russian authorities were located just beyond our own border? We know that, however "correct" the policy of the Russian Government may be, its agents in remote parts of the Empire are allowed not infrequently to adopt a line of their own, which is but little in accordance with the friendly assurances of St. Petersburg, whilst in the event of international friction elsewhere, from the Mediterranean to the Pacific, the Russian Government could hardly be expected to refrain from using to our detriment the opportunities of intrigue afforded by close proximity to our Indian Empire. Is such a contingency one that could be contemplated without alarm by those who are responsible for the maintenance of law and order even within the narrow limits of Baluchistan, let alone by those who are responsible for the maintenance of peace throughout the length and breadth of India, where, under a system of government such as ours, which, in the main, applies to alien races the principles of British freedom, the tares of unsatisfied ambition and disloyal restlessness are bound to grow up along with a goodly harvest of progress?

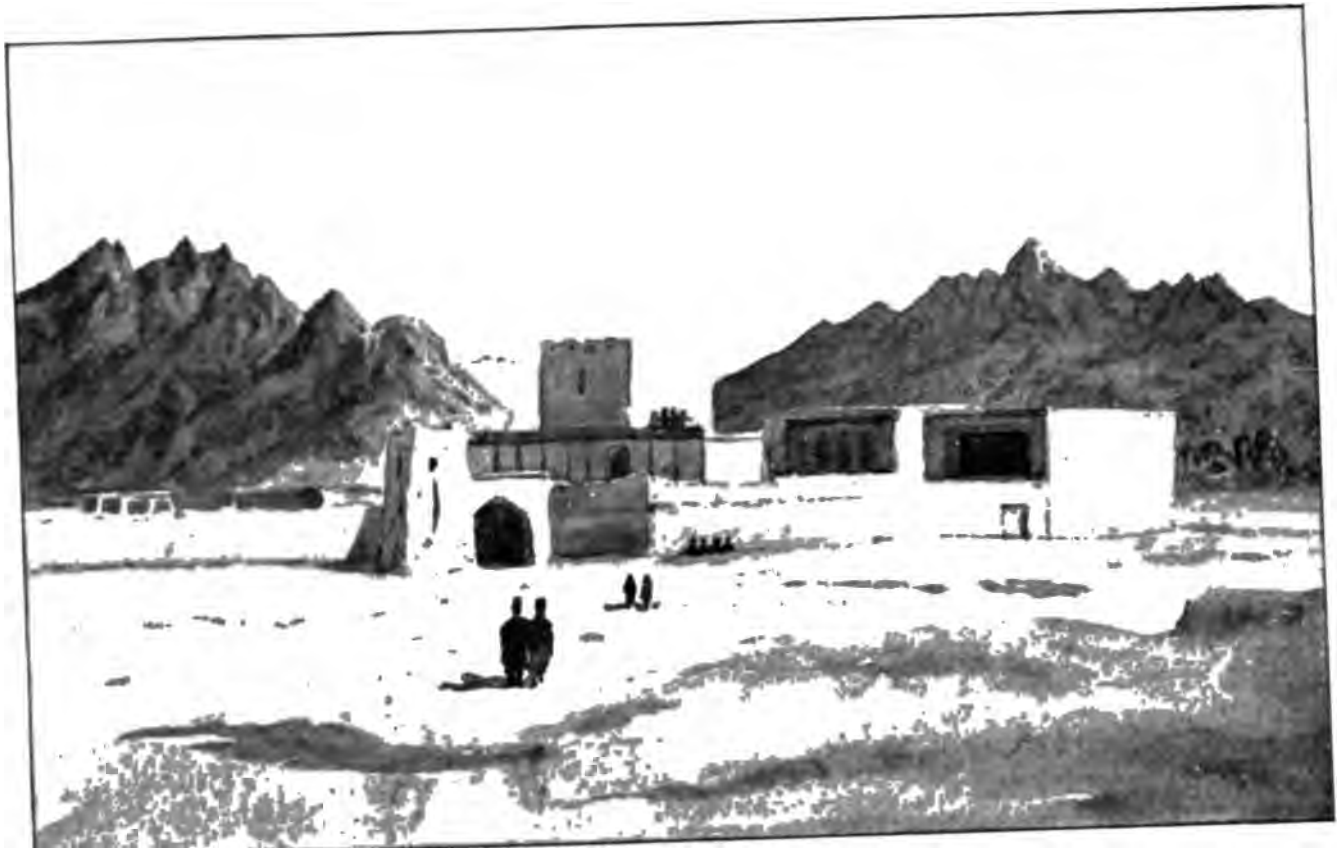
Yet these are the consequences we must be prepared to face in the more or less near future if the views of those prevail in England who contend that the fate of Persia is no concern of ours, and that, for aught we need care, Russia may be allowed to reduce her to-morrow to the level of Khiva or Bokhara. It is, I repeat, unnecessary to assume any greater antagonism between Russia and England than that which the rivalry of nations produces in many other quarters, or to take *au pied de la lettre* the writings of influential

Russians, some of them in very high positions, who claim for Russia a mission of dominion in Asia, which, to say the least, appears to postulate the disappearance of British rule from India. The extension of Russian ascendency in Persia, at the rate at which it is spreading to-day, means within no remote period the practical elimination of one of the chief factors upon which depends the maintenance of India in the same kind of relative immunity from the dangers of immediate contact with a great military power which our own islands owe to the "silver streak."

CHAPTER XXV

CAN THE BALANCE OF POWER BE RESTORED IN PERSIA?

I HAVE passed in review the different steps by which Russia has gradually reduced the Shah's Government to a position of absolute dependency. She has complete military control of the Caspian and of the whole northern frontier of Persia, from Tabriz in the West to Meshed in the East. In the Persian capital and in the provinces she disposes at her discretion of the only serviceable body of Persian troops, who are under the command of Russian officers and whose pay she secures. It is largely to the personal action of their late commander, General Kosagowsky, that Muzaffer-ed-Din is indebted for his unchallenged succession to the throne, and the same power that made the present Shah can by the same means unmake him at any moment. The men of the Cossack Brigade serve with the colours only long enough to be duly impressed with a sense of the allegiance they owe to their Russian officers and paymasters. They are then sent off to the provinces, where they act as guards to the governors, and as agents for the propagation of Russian influence and for the collection of information required by their Russian employers. To the power of the sword Russia has added the power of the purse. The Shah is her pensioner; by nature a spendthrift



and addicted to every form of sensual self-indulgence, unchecked by his ministers, who for their own purposes pander to his reckless extravagance, he naturally clings to the Power that is not only ready to provide for his financial necessities, but delicately refrains from asking any unpleasant questions as to how the money is spent. By financing Persia as she has done during the last few years, Russia has secured a grip of the entire Persian administration, so far as it is controlled from Teheran. In the meantime she is recouping herself by prosecuting the commercial conquest of Persia. For this purpose she has not only at her service a powerful institution like the Russian Banque d'Escompte at Teheran, which is merely a department of the Russian Ministry of Finance, but she has shown that she can manipulate the whole commercial policy of Persia. She has succeeded in negotiating over our head a new tariff agreement with Persia for the benefit of her own trade which we have been compelled to accept as the basis of our own commercial relations. Apart from these considerations she has got excellent security for her loans; and when the inevitable hour of Persian bankruptcy arrives she is in an admirable position for exercising, forcibly or otherwise, her rights of foreclosure. As far as the Customs, which constitute the formal security for the Russian loans, are concerned, she is already in possession, through the Belgian administration, which, though nominally neutral, is, and must inevitably be, dominated by the Russian Ministry of Finance.

The people of Persia have a vague consciousness of impending ruin, but they have no leaders, and in any case they realise that the old remedies by which they used to help themselves when dynastic misrule had overstepped the limits even of Oriental patience cannot

be applied to a dynasty backed by the material support of such a power as Russia. On the contrary, there are abundant indications that some of those who are most disaffected to the present régime are looking forward to the day when, the Shah and his ministers having played out the part for which they are at present cast, Russia will throw them overboard and assume direct control over the government of the country. Similar influences are at work even among the Bakhtiaris and in other remote parts of the Shah's dominions where his writ has hitherto seldom run without dispute. Behind the centralising activity of Teheran the hand of Russia is felt to be pressing heavily, and her hand may be propitiated but cannot be resisted.

In a word, Russia is reaping to-day the results of a carefully thought-out, consistent, and persevering policy, carried out by a staff of highly trained officials, specially equipped with a thorough knowledge of the language, the customs, and the people of the country. It may be asked why, if Persia is already so completely in her grip, she prefers not to enter into actual possession. The answer is an easy one to those who have followed Russian policy in other parts of the East. Russia prefers a feeble and bankrupt Oriental neighbour to an annexed dependency. She has learnt the secret of ruling an Eastern state through its nominal owners, if only they are weak, corrupt, and in her pay. It is a device which can be combined with all the external forms of respect for existing treaties; it does not conflict with the technical maintenance of the *status quo;* it spares the susceptibilities of other powers; it minimises the danger of international complications; it gives a maximum of power with a minimum of responsibility.

The only Power whose interests have been seriously affected by the profound change which Russia has wrought by a series of subtle and almost imperceptible transitions in the condition of Persia is Great Britain, and her interests are, it must be admitted, affected mainly in connection with India. It is perhaps for this reason that British statesmen have been so reluctant to realise the magnitude and importance of the change, and preferred to take refuge in comfortable assurances with regard to the maintenance of the *status quo;* as if the nominal maintenance of a technical independence and territorial integrity were likely to have, in the long run, any more meaning in Persia than it has, for instance, at the present day in Manchuria. It may indeed be doubted whether, until quite recently, they ever attempted to face the situation in Persia. England has been represented in turn at Teheran by men of very different idiosyncrasies—within the last fifteen years by Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, Sir Frank Lascelles, Sir Mortimer Durand, and now by Sir Arthur Hardinge, all men who have achieved distinction in other diplomatic fields. If they have all failed to arrest permanently the steady decline of British influence, there must be some common cause for their collective failure.

It may be partly due to the fact that, whilst in every other Eastern country our Government has recognised the necessity of creating a trained staff of Oriental secretaries and consuls, Englishmen of good repute equipped for the special work required of them, the British Legation at Teheran never has possessed, and does not possess to-day, any properly organised service of the kind. This is a subject upon which it is difficult to touch without importing personal reflections

which may seem unduly invidious. But by those who know the East it certainly cannot be regarded as a satisfactory state of things that during the last few years a complete breakdown of the Oriental Secretariat at the Teheran Legation has been averted only by the accident that a gentleman appointed to be Vice-Consul, a post for which great linguistic attainments are not indispensable, happened to be a scholar who was able to discharge the duties of Oriental Secretary, whilst the gentleman appointed to the latter post did the Vice-Consular work. Nor can the employment on responsible work of a native gentleman, whose brother was one of the Atabeg's secretaries, be considered altogether satisfactory in the light of certain past experiences in connection with native members of the Legation staff. Without making any personal imputations, one may be allowed to suspect that the Atabeg-Azam knew more of what was going on at the British Legation than the British Minister was allowed to know of what went on in the Grand Vizier's department. The way in which, after a whole year's secrecy, the Russo-Persian Commercial Convention was sprung upon us would seem to be a case in point.

With the exception of the political officers appointed by the Indian Government to consular duties in the Gulf and in Eastern Persia, we have had absolutely no specially trained consular service in the country, and we may consider ourselves fortunate to have found one or two very efficient members of the Indo-European Telegraph Department, who, like our present Consul-General at Isfahan and our Consul at Muhammerah, have been able to step into the breach. Of late the Foreign Office has awakened to the importance of this subject. One of the most promising members of the Levant consular

service has been appointed Consul-General at Tabriz, and the Vice-Consul at Teheran, who has been discharging, with an efficiency no one was entitled to expect from the incumbent of that post, the duties of Oriental Secretary, has been promoted to Shiraz, where we have never yet had any regular consular representation. New consulates are also to be created at Kermanshah, a very important centre of trade in Western Persia, and at Ahwaz on the Karun, where we ought to have had one years ago, as soon as that river was thrown open to navigation. Yezd, however, is another important point, especially in view of the new land telegraph line to India, for which no provision seems yet to have been made. The Indian Government, on the other hand, has appointed a Consul at Bunder Abbas in addition to the posts which it had already maintained at Bushire and Kerman and in Khorasan and Seistan. The very marked difference in the scale of pay and allowances granted respectively by the Indian Government and by the Foreign Office, whose own better judgment in such matters is too often overruled by the Treasury, places serious difficulties in the way of homogeneous organisation. That with our vast interests in all parts of the East, this country should still be the only one amongst the chief countries of Europe that does not possess any national institution for the study of Oriental languages, such as the Ecole des Langues Orientales vivantes in Paris, the Seminar für orientalische Sprachen in Berlin, and the Oriental School in St. Petersburg, is an almost unaccountable fact, which increases the difficulty of finding at a moment's notice suitable men even for the posts which are recognised to be most urgently needed. Not that a knowledge of the vernacular, though indispensable,

is the only qualification for such posts. Apart from a healthy and active *physique*, capable of standing, not only the climatic conditions of Persia, but long journeys on horseback and a certain amount of hardship, a Consul requires tact as well as stability of character, and political acumen as well as a knowledge of commercial questions. The Foreign Office appears to be hesitating between the creation of a separate consular service for Persia on the lines of the existing Levant consular service (which in practice is now almost entirely confined to the Turkish Empire), and an extension of the latter to include Persia within its field. Persia differs in many ways so widely from Turkey that, in theory and in practice, every argument should tell in favour of separate services, were it not for the one serious fact which experience has already demonstrated in Turkey, that in a service specialised within too inelastic an area promotion becomes hopelessly blocked, with the inevitable result of general discontent and a gradual deterioration in the class of candidates for admission to a service that has lost its popularity. However this particular point may be decided, it is, at least, satisfactory to know that the whole question is being seriously considered. For the efficiency of our diplomacy at Teheran must be largely dependent upon the efficiency of those who serve it in and outside the capital.

But far more than to the inefficiency of the instruments with which it has worked, the failure of our diplomacy in Persia has been, I venture to say, due to the fact that the British representatives at Teheran have never been provided by Ministers at home with any definite and comprehensive scheme of policy to work upon. Russia cannot be blamed for taking advantage of our

own sins of omission. Indeed, it does credit to the astuteness and patience of her statesmanship that she has not pressed them further, but has, on the contrary, encouraged the Persian Government to keep up appearances and make an occasional pretence of maintaining its boasted "policy of equilibrium" whenever the scale took so sudden and visible a drop towards the Russian side of the balance as to disturb the official optimism of Downing Street. So long as her own purposes can be equally well served by pulling the wires of her Persian puppets from the wings, she can have no interest and no desire to precipitate a crisis by taking possession of the stage, and a few timely concessions to British diplomacy for the working of petroleum wells in Southern Persia, or for the construction of telegraph lines which will ultimately revert to the Persian Government and its heirs or assignees, turn away wrath, but do not retard the steady consolidation of Russian power. The Shah comes to London in all the state of an independent and puissant Oriental monarch, but, none the less, he has, and Russia knows that he has, all the time, hidden away in his pocket, the convention by which she has made him sign away the conditions under which British trade has prospered for three-quarters of a century in Persia.

It is high time to look at facts as they are, and not as we would all gladly imagine them to be, though we need not look at them in a spirit of narrow jealousy. As surely as Russia's ascendency is to-day impregnably established in the North of Persia, so will it gradually, and with the increased momentum of acquired speed, be established throughout Persia down to the Gulf and to the confines of India, if it is given time to extend the sphere of its operations through all the different

agencies which it controls, either directly or through the normal rulers of the country. The official dictum has, I know, always been that the *status quo* is to be maintained and the integrity and independence of Persia preserved. But to apply these diplomatic formulæ even to the present condition of things in Persia would be a mere juggling with words, scarcely less futile than to apply them to the present condition of things in Northern China, with Russia entrenched in Manchuria, Germany pushing forward from her naval base in Shan-tung, and ourselves in blissful possession of a *potential* health resort at Wei-hai-wei. If they have any meaning at all, they can only mean that we intend to preserve, or rather to restore, the balance of power which the *status quo*, and the integrity and independence of Persia, had they continued to be realities, would have secured.

To restore the balance of power in Persia is a practical policy, and it is not yet too late to prosecute it with success. But it can be prosecuted with success only by concentrating our efforts within well-defined limits. It would be futile to try and ignore Russia's ascendency over the Central Government of Persia and the political interests she has in the North. They are the inevitable result of territorial proximity. We have similar interests in the South and East, and material interests even more important, and of far older date. We have an old-established trade of considerable value to our own industry and of still greater value to India. We have concessions for the construction of roads which should enable our commerce to compete even under the altered conditions of the new tariff with the bounty-fed trade of Russia. Our commercial and political base is the Persian Gulf. Both politically and commercially

KALAVAI TUT THE ANCIENT CASTLE OF THE CHAMBIR LANG BAKHTIARIS (p. 154)

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it is of the utmost urgency that we should open up roads from our base into the interior. The new "Persian Transports Company" has acquired the concessions originally granted to the Imperial Bank of Persia. If it receives the support and encouragement it is entitled to expect from the British Government, the Karun trade route should develop into an important artery for the extension of British commerce into the central and western markets of Persia, not only through the Bakhtiari mountains to Isfahan and Kashan and beyond, but also through Luristan to Sultanabad and Kum. It has been officially announced that negotiations were in progress for the speedy construction of one of those two roads, which would ultimately place Teheran itself in communication with the Karun river. By the same token these roads should serve to spread British influence among the hardy tribesmen who, since the days of Layard, have never entirely lost confidence in the magic of the British name. Both amongst the inland tribes and the population of the coast we have clients who still look to us for protection against the misgovernment of Teheran—an essential fact which the British Minister at Teheran, who has to live with the Central Government, finds it often more convenient to ignore. We have pledges from the Shah's Government which Lord Lansdowne has recently again assured us are still binding, with regard to the construction of railways in the South, and the British Government will have to insist that they are redeemed as soon as the Russo-Persian Agreement expires, which at present closes against us this important field of enterprise. We have constructed through Persian territory, on terms much more favourable to the Persians than those to which Russia has

in analogous cases agreed, a telegraph system which forms, together with the Gulf cable, an indispensable section of our Indo-European communications. In 1902 we undertook to construct a new line, which will join the Bushire-Teheran line at Kashan direct from the land frontier of British India by way of Kerman and Yezd, and 140 miles of it had already been constructed in the first half of 1903. The line is to be leased, like the present ones, to the Indo-European Telegraphs Department, and will be maintained by a British staff under a British director. The Imperial Bank of Persia is a British institution, founded under a Royal Charter, and with adequate support it should still be in a position to play a considerable part, even in competition with its directly state-aided and state-controlled rival, the Russian Banque d'Escompte de Perse. It has already once secured a lien on the revenues of the southern Custom-houses of Persia, which it lost, however, as the first result of the original Russo-Persian loan of 1900. But those revenues are still, it is believed, unpledged to Russia, though they are already collected by the Belgian administration she controls, and every effort should be made to prevent their passing irrevocably into her hands. Lord Cranborne has intimated in the House of Commons that there was no need to assume so confidently as some members had done "that the Persian Government were rigidly bound in the matter of their finance not to borrow from any other country than Russia." The Shah's Government is doubtless debarred from accepting a loan from any foreign state without the consent of Russia, but it is not debarred from making arrangements of a financial character in other quarters on a business basis. To the strategic importance of Seistan, which has now been fully recog-

nised by our Indian military authorities, has been added the commercial importance of a new trade route which promises results of increasing value.

These are some of the most obvious considerations which should serve to determine the zone within which our influence might be made a living force, by a systematic co-ordination and concentration of its constituent elements. It should certainly not be unduly expanded. From the strategetical point of view, as far as the defence of India itself is concerned, would a line drawn from Seistan to the Persian Gulf so as to include Kerman and Bunder Abbas constitute the irreducible minimum? Or would it be necessary, for the effective protection of our commercial and political interests and of our supremacy throughout the Gulf, that a broader line should be drawn, for instance, from Seistan across to the valley of the Karun river, to the north of Yezd and Isfahan and over the Bakhtiari mountains? It would be rash to attempt to prejudge these points. They require the careful study of military and naval experts, and we must be mindful to cut our coat according to our cloth. At the same time we must not allow the difficulties and risks which clearly attach to any active policy to blind us to the still greater difficulties and risks which mere inaction must ultimately involve. Within the regions where we have no very important material interests to guard, and where the ascendency of a great military power need not immediately or appreciably react upon the safety of India, we are certainly not called upon to be more Persian than the Persians, or to adopt an attitude of gratuitous opposition to Russia. But in the East and the South of Persia there are regions in which the presence of Russia, or, for the matter of that, if it were conceivable,

the presence of any other foreign military power, would inevitably constitute a grave potential menace to the peace and security of India. The question of where the limits of such regions should be placed is, I submit, one which calls urgently for sober examination; and in framing the answer, those who are responsible for the government of India must be entitled to have no mere perfunctory share. When the answer has been framed it should not be beyond the resources of diplomacy to embody it in such a form as would leave room for the satisfaction of Russia's legitimate ambitions in Persia, if they are not directed to the ulterior objects which Russian statesmanship has hitherto officially disclaimed. At any rate, we should then know how we stand. If Russia proved as reasonable as her champions anticipate, a big step would have been taken towards removing the atmosphere of suspicion which, on both sides, at present vitiates our relations with her. If she should unfortunately not prove so, we should be warned in time to take whatever steps might be considered most expedient in relation to our Imperial interests and to our Imperial resources for the defence of our position. The worst of all policies is the policy of drift, for those who take refuge in it invariably end by being its dupes. In China it led us into a maze of embarrassments from which we have not yet extricated ourselves, even with the help of the Japanese alliance. Where, as in Southern and Eastern Persia, the security of India is concerned it might well land us in a national catastrophe.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE BORDERLAND OF AFGHANISTAN

FEW spots in the world can afford greater interest to the student of primitive social conditions than the rugged belt of territory intervening, on the north-west frontier, between the boundaries of direct British administration and of Afghan rule. Of the purely military problems connected with the defence of the north-west frontier I shall not presume to discuss the intricacies, but it requires no expert knowledge to appreciate some of the difficulties which underlie them. In the deep valleys and secluded glens which nature has fenced in with almost inaccessible mountains, wild tribes of mixed and mysterious origin, in whom Afghan and Tartar and Turkoman and Persian and Indian and Arab and Jewish, and whatever other elements go to make up Pathan blood appear in some remote period to have commingled, have lived their life for centuries, knowing naught of the outer world and caring less for it. Even amongst themselves there was but little intercourse except that of intertribal warfare, and the only bond that ever could unite them in common action was the bond of Islam. The little knowledge we have of them to-day has been acquired but slowly and at great cost, and amongst all the varied problems with which British statesmanship has been confronted in

India few have been more arduous than that of shaping our policy towards these unruly neighbours with whom the necessities of empire have driven us into closer and closer contact. Nearly a score of punitive expeditions during the course of the last half-century have only "lifted the *purdah*" of this weird and inhospitable region, but gradually, in spite of many blunders on our own side and of deep-rooted suspicions and fitful outbursts of fanaticism on the other, a compromise has been come to, which holds forth, it is hoped, the prospect of a durable settlement on practical lines. The principle upon which this settlement is based is that, whilst we exercise over the tribes the political influence requisite to secure our Imperial interests and pay them subsidies for the performance of specific services, we respect their tribal independence and leave them, as far as possible, free to govern themselves according to their own traditions, and to follow their own inherited habits of life without let or hindrance. To this latitude we are, however, compelled, unfortunately, to place certain limits, and the tribes are, just as unfortunately, almost compelled from time to time to overstep them. The resources of the country are in ordinary seasons barely sufficient for the tribesmen to maintain themselves, and in bad seasons the temptation to supply deficiencies by raiding, dakoity, and robbery, either in British or Afghan territory, becomes almost irresistible. We are bound to defend our own borders, as we have disarmed the inhabitants in the districts we administer and made ourselves responsible for their protection. We are equally bound to forbid raiding into Afghan territory, as we are ourselves responsible for the good behaviour of our frontier tribes *vis-à-vis* the Ameer. The only mode of punishment in serious

cases, where pecuniary fines are inadequate, is, and must remain, a punitive expedition, or a "blockade," which is often a mere euphemism for a punitive expedition, if it does not, in fact, develop into one.

Of the tribes that inhabit this belt of so-called "independent territory" none are more powerful and none cling more fiercely to their own savage ideals of freedom than the Afridis, six of whose eight clans dwell in the mountain fastnesses which command the Khaibar Pass. The Khaibar is the best known, and perhaps the most important, of all the passes leading from Afghanistan into India. Through the Khaibar the tide of conquest from the North has flowed into the plains of Hindustan from the earliest times known to history. From Alexander the Great and Timur, down to Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah in the eighteenth century, the Khaibar has re-echoed to the tramp of armies and the tumult of invading hordes. But they passed and left the Afridis practically untouched in possession of their mountain strongholds. Three times within the last century our armies, reversing the course of history, have marched up the Khaibar into Afghanistan, though with no purpose of permanent conquest, and the Afridis have only bent to our power without bowing to the yoke. Liable as they have from time to time shown themselves to sudden gusts of religious passion, they have no permanently fanatical hatred of the unbeliever, and in the height of the Mutiny, Lawrence recruited some 1,500 Afridis, who served bravely and loyally on our side in Oudh. To-day several thousands of them are to be found in the ranks of our native army. "Islam," nevertheless, remains a good battle-cry, and the *Mullahs* who know when to raise it are powerful leaders, inasmuch as they are generally wise enough to

lead the Afridis in the direction in which the popular temper wants to move. The Pan-Islamic revival of the last ten years, which was largely promoted by the late Ameer Abdurrahman for his own ends, has unquestionably produced a new solidarity of feeling between the tribes, which is compounded partly of religious feeling and partly of an inarticulate patriotism that would perhaps equally resent the intrusion of a Mussulman foreign power into their mountain homes. For within their own native fastnesses they still preserve the savage independence of their tribal life, and if they have recognised the necessity of treating with the power that holds the plains into which many of their clans are from time to time driven to descend *en masse*, as, for instance, in the winter of 1902–3, by exceptional drought and the failure of the scanty harvest in their own highland valleys, neither force nor diplomacy has yet succeeded in disarming their fierce jealousy of alien domination.

The boundary of direct British administration on the road to the Khaibar ceases about nine miles north of Peshawar, and from that point onward, right through the pass to the Afghan frontier, thirty-four miles to the north of Peshawar, the road lies through "independent territory." But the road itself is subject to British law, for on the road, at any rate, the *pax Britannica* must prevail inviolate. From the fort of Jamrud, which guards the southern mouth of the Khaibar, the road winds in easy gradients up to the narrow defile commanded by the fortified pinnacle of Ali Masjid, and then again down a broadening valley to the northern exit, where the fort of Lundi Kotal overlooks the final descent into Afghanistan. Throughout its entire length the road is flanked on either side

by stark and desolate hills, rising sometimes in sheer precipices to a height of several hundred feet, whilst other and loftier ranges fill in the background in deepening shades of distant purple against the azure sky. Besides the three chief positions which are permanently garrisoned, small blockhouses have been erected at numerous intermediate points, and on the days on which caravans pass through, to and from Afghanistan, the silhouette of a detached picket as he rises to salute a passing officer, whom the keen Afridi eye distinguishes at a thousand yards, stands out on the hilltops on every successive coign of vantage within probable rifle-shot of the road. For though the tribes as a whole may be resolved to discharge loyally their engagements to respect the peace of the road, it is well never to forget the native proverb, that "the Pathan is one moment a saint and the next a devil." If the devil now but rarely breaks loose in the Khaibar Afridi, it is probably due in no small measure to the fact that we have been able to enlist the Afridi to exorcise him.

It was a bold experiment to place the political system we have established in the "independent territory" under the protection of tribal levies recruited on the spot. The success which has attended these levies has not been altogether uniform, partly because the quality of the raw material varies considerably in the different tribes. In the Samana country, for instance, a levy has been raised called the Samana Rifles, and it was intended that they should take the place of the regular forces. But so far it has not been considered advisable to withdraw the latter, and it is doubtful whether from Fort Lockhart, at any rate, they will ever be withdrawn. In Tochi and Wano minor posts are now held by the North and South Waziristan Militias, but the chief

points are still held by troops. Malakand, Chakdara, and Chitral are also still entirely held by troops, and the tribal militia system in that region has only been carried so far as to raise some levies for the escort of mails. But in the Khaibar the success appears to have been complete. From end to end the pass is held by two battalions of Khaibar Rifles, under the command of Major Roos-Keppel, the political officer for the Khaibar, who was the first to raise a similar force, and with equal success, in the Kuram valley, which is also now entirely held by the Kuram Militia. These tribal levies at their best do not stand in any way on the same footing as the native regiments of the regular Indian Army, and their officers do not claim for them the same smartness on parade, nor enforce upon them in minor matters the same rigid discipline. But for the special work for which they are intended in a rugged mountain country of which they know every goat track and every denizen, their superiority is undisputed. With the Afridis the service is growing so rapidly in popularity that there is plenty of room now to pick and choose recruits, whilst the attractions which it holds out to young British officers keen for work and not afraid of responsibility make the few appointments it offers a coveted distinction. It would certainly be difficult to find a more serviceable and at the same time a more contented-looking and, indeed, cheery body of men than the Khaibar Rifles. Though the new organisation has not yet been subjected to the critical strain of serious disturbances amongst the tribesmen, the confidence and almost childlike affection they display towards the half-dozen British officers who are the only European stiffening of the two battalions, affords presumptive evidence that the strain would have

at least to be very severe and prolonged before their loyalty gave way to the pressure of tribal kinship or of religious enthusiasm.

One of the many riddles of the Oriental character is the relative ease with which the individual Afridi who joins a corps like the Khaibar Rifles passes from his own native atmosphere of lawlessness into an atmosphere of orderly and methodical existence under military discipline, and then back again from the latter into the former. Curiously enough, this adaptability to new conditions appears to exist in direct proportion to the "jungliness" of the recruit. For instance, Zakka Khel recruits are, according to the testimony of experienced British officers, more easily broken in than Kambu or Kuki Khel recruits, though the former clan has served but very little in our native army, while the two latter have furnished large contingents for half a century. Anyhow, and whatever his clan may be, the life which the Afridi recruit has been accustomed to lead until he dons his uniform is one which we can hardly realise, or which we are apt to connect only with a remote past when our civilisation was in its infancy. As soon as the boundary of direct British administration is crossed one enters into another world of social conditions. The villages at once assume a different character. It is the Afridi country, and every man builds unto himself a stronghold as formidable for offensive and defensive purposes as his resources enable him to make it. Here, in truth, a man's house is his castle. A stout mud wall carefully loopholed surrounds the enclosure in which the tribesman lives with his womenkind and such of his children and kinsmen as are not in a position to set up for themselves. Above the enclosure rises a square tower built

mainly of stone, though generally plastered over with mud. It serves in ordinary times as a look-out from which he can watch the proceedings of friend and foe (and the Afridi's best friend is always a potential foe). If there is actually a state of war between him and his neighbours it is from the curtained gallery which runs round the upper storey that he directs his operations and keeps up a brisk or desultory fire, according to his stock of ammunition, upon every hostile thing that lives and moves and has a being. When the tide of war turns against him it is the last refuge to which he conveys his most cherished goods and chattels, animate or inanimate; and it is there that, after carefully drawing up the ladder by which access can alone be obtained to it, he and his fighting men make their last stand. If the tower has been well provisioned and there is an adequate supply of water, the last stand may often be prolonged until assistance is forthcoming from without, or the patience or ammunition of the besiegers is exhausted; for these solid towers are absolutely proof against mere rifle fire, and many of them would even stand a fair amount of shelling from field-guns. They can be, and are known to have been, pulled down stone by stone by their assailants, and sometimes their occupants have been smoked out by piling up a fire against the only aperture. But this can hardly be done unless the defenders have spent their last shot, for as the floor of the upper gallery is loopholed as well as the curtain, the assailants who venture up to the base can be subjected to a direct vertical fire.

Under these conditions regular hostilities are, fortunately, apt to be more prolonged than sanguinary, but, perhaps for this very reason also, they are

regarded almost as one of the normal conditions or, at least, the common incidents of life. Amongst these tribesmen, in whom the fighting instinct of man has remained hitherto absolutely uncurbed, every quarrel resolves itself into a blood-feud, and at the bottom of most quarrels in the primitive East, as in the highly civilised West, lurks "the eternal feminine." *Cherchez la femme* is a precept which holds equally good in the mud fort of an Afridi chieftain and in the fashionable salons of Paris. Once a blood-feud breaks out it is difficult to assign limits to its duration or extension. Whole villages take sides; one-half of a valley is pitted against the other half; or the feud may be confined to the original parties, but handed down from father to son. Sometimes, in presence of a greater common danger or in the pursuit of some greater common advantage, a truce will be called which may last for years, and as long as the truce lasts neighbourly relations are often restored on the same footing of mutual helpfulness as if no blood-feud had ever existed. But "a Pathan's enmity smoulders like a dung fire," and at any moment the truce may be denounced, and the "dung fire" breaks out again into scorching flames. Reckless as the Afridi may be of his own life, and ready to face his foe, if need be, in open combat, he would think it mere foolishness to run such an unnecessary risk if he could find a chance of stabbing him from behind in the dark. Only last year a case occurred in which a blood-feud of long standing, and waged hitherto with only desultory vigour, was brought to a close by a stratagem as successful as it was sanguinary. One of the parties to the feud contrived to dig a tunnel under the fields which separated the two warring houses up to the chamber which

did duty as a mosque where his enemy worshipped. Through this tunnel he crept up with his own friends and shot his foe and all his foe's kinsmen from behind whilst they were at prayer.

At the same time the Afridi has his code of honour, elastic as it may seem to us, and to that code he conforms, as a rule, rigidly. He observes equally strictly the limitations which the peace of the road has imposed upon him since the Khaibar Pass came under our control — his self-restraint being presumably not a little fortified by the knowledge that in this matter punishment, usually in the shape of a heavy fine or the burning of the offender's house, follows the offence both surely and speedily. On the road itself, and on a strip about 100 yards wide on either side, no feud can be pleaded in justification of any deed of violence. Not only has the Afridi learnt to respect the neutrality of the road, but he has been quick to turn it to account on occasion for his own relief. Going into the Khaibar we passed two strongholds at the southern mouth of the pass only a couple of hundred yards apart which had been for a long time at deadly feud. Each party had dug a shelter trench reaching from his tower to the road, by which he could pass to and fro without being exposed to his enemy's fire. Once on the road both parties could and were bound to meet only on a peace footing. A little further on a man with a rifle was squatting on a bank close to the road. He was covering his family, who were at work tilling their fields. From that neutral ground he could watch in absolute safety for any enemy who might be lurking to raid his people, and though he could not fire a shot from where he had taken up his position, he had only to run forward a few yards to do so in case of need, and then run back again

for safety. Again, at the other end of the Pass at Lundi Kotal, whilst I was sauntering in the morning sunshine about the trim little garden, bright with chrysanthemums and marigolds, which our officers had laid out in the central quadrangle of the fort, quite a brisk fusillade was being carried on between two villages in the valley outside; but if a stray shot ever hits the fort, it may be taken for granted that it is an accident. So thoroughly is the peace of the Khaibar considered to be at present assured that, special precautions having of course been duly taken, the Duke of Connaught was able to explore the Pass in company with the Duchess and spend a night at Lundi Kotal during his visit to the north-west frontier after the Delhi Durbar.

It is from such surroundings as I have just described that the Afridi—cruel, turbulent, vindictive, reared to know no law but his own fierce will and revelling in his lawlessness—passes into the confinement of the barrack-room and the still closer confinement of its rules and regulations. A strange compound of contradictory qualities, he respects the spirit of justice and straightforwardness of his British masters, and to some extent will try to conform his behaviour towards them to their standard, though he would never dream of imitating them in his relations with his own people. Even when he is serving with the colours he is leading a sort of dual existence. One of the severest tests to which his sense of discipline can be put is when he is refused leave to go back for a few days to his own village, where a blood-feud has happened to reach a specially acute stage. That he should have an opportunity of joining his people and taking a hand in the fight appears to him the most excellent justification for

asking for leave. But when his petition is refused he makes no demur, though his whole being leaps to the fray. He accepts his officer's ruling docilely, nay, almost cheerfully, and will do so as long as he is "in the regiment," just as he will wear its uniform with a certain air of jaunty smartness, however irksome it may be to his limbs. But the moment he is released from service, whether merely on furlough or permanently at the expiry of his term, he steps off proudly in his loose-flowing, ragged garments and carries back to his walled village in the highlands not only the tall, well-knit frame of an essentially manly race, matured and developed by a course of soldierly training, but sharper wits and added knowledge—all, however, to be applied once more to the gratification of the same fierce instincts which have been inbred in him and his forefathers for generations.

If the *purdah* has to some extent been lifted from the weird borderland of Afghanistan, upon Afghanistan itself it has fallen once more in almost impenetrable folds. From the hills above Lundi Kotal the road may be seen winding down the valley to the point where the actual dominions of the Ameer begin. Beyond that point the eye ranges over the valley through which the Kabul river draws a thread of silver to the mountains which conceal the city of Kabul itself, and beyond them again to the perpetual snows of the Hindu Kush in the direction of Balkh, whilst on the extreme right the glistening peaks of Kafiristan close the horizon. It is a wonderful panorama of browns and blues and purples, of sun-scorched plains and rare oases, of rugged ranges intersected by deep glens and gloomy valleys, of mountains piled upon mountains in the far distance up to the very roof of the world. And from

THE VIEW INTO AFGHANISTAN FROM LUNDI KOTAL

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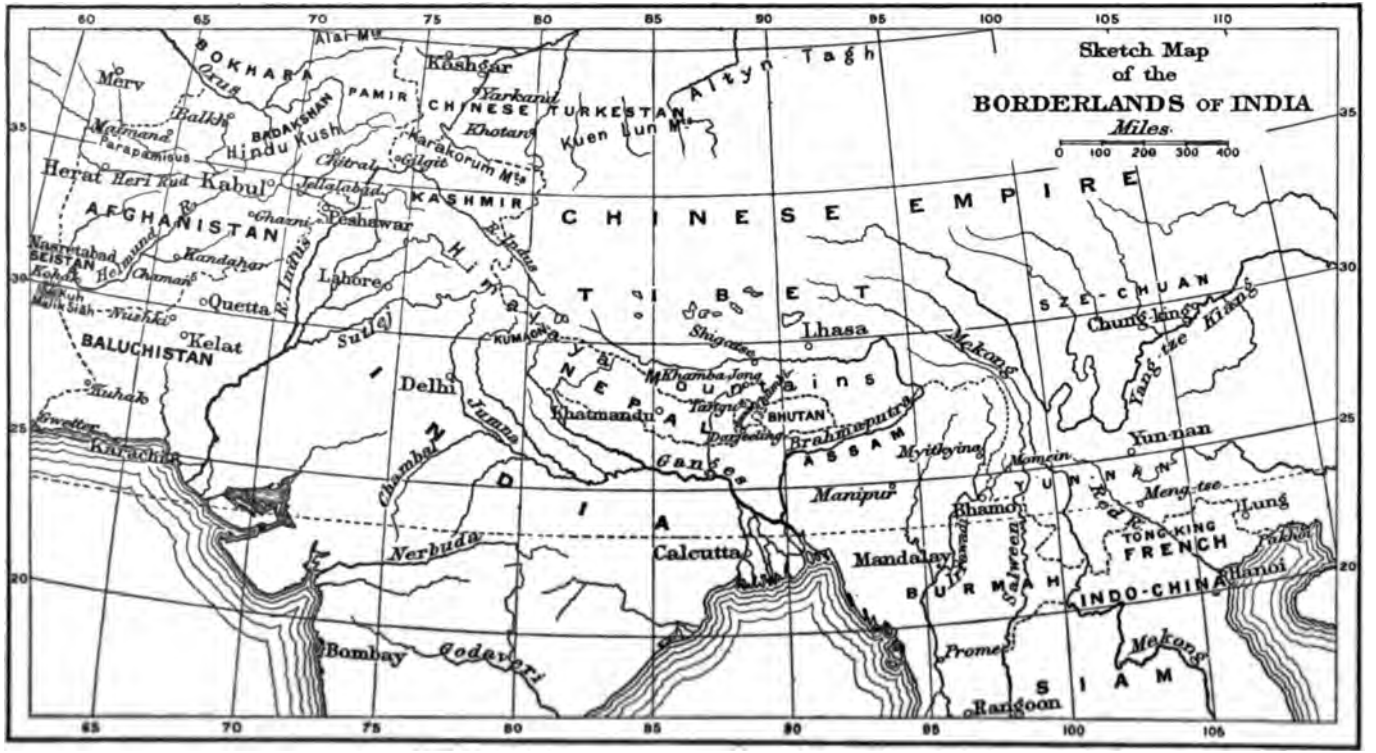
the strange beauty of this grand and spacious landscape one's thoughts travel involuntarily to the human interests bound up with it and the mystery in which they lie enveloped. For there are few regions, so closely connected with us by political ties of the first importance, with which we are so remotely in touch. For years past no European has crossed that frontier—only a stone's-throw from the outposts of our Empire—except the few foreigners whom the Ameer has engaged for special purposes, and their opportunities of communicating freely with the outer world are few and far between. Twice a week a British escort receives at the frontier from an Afghan escort the trading caravan which brings down the produce of Afghanistan into the markets of India, and hands over to its charge the return caravan which supplies the demands of Kabul upon the industries of the West. The caravans pass up and down the road through the Khaibar with undisturbed regularity — hundreds of huge, ungainly, Central Asian camels, sure-footed and powerful, bellowing and gurgling under their heavy loads; big, broad-shouldered, bearded Afghans, shouting and blustering, but good-humoured and easy-going, though their bold, erect carriage and the fierce gleam of their eyes show the mettle they are made of; and, every year at the approach of winter, hundreds of Pathan tribesmen—Mohmands, Hazaras—from the other side of the frontier, who troop down with their women and children, some of them blue-eyed and fair-haired like a northern race, with their herds and their flocks, with their dogs and their cats and their hens, to seek work and to find pastures for a time in the milder climate of the Peshawar plain. But when the caravans have passed the Khaibar closes its gates and all intercourse ceases as absolutely as if

there were a Great Wall of China between India and Afghanistan. News, of course, does filter through, and the Indian Government has its own channels of communication, official and unofficial, with the Ameer and his people. But though there is an abundance of bazaar gossip at Peshawar and the whole frontier yields a lively crop of rumours, the amount of trustworthy information which can be obtained with regard to what is going on in Afghanistan is singularly scanty. Yet in the recesses of this untamed country which has survived in the heart of Asia as a relic of bygone ages, inaccessible to telegraphs and railways, or, indeed, to any but the warlike appliances of the modern world, great changes have been taking place during the last twenty years, of which the consequences may affect us at any moment more closely than anything that has happened during the same period in countries with which we are in daily and intimate contact.


Sketch Map
of the
BORDERLANDS OF INDIA
Miles
0 100 200 300 400
CHINESE EMPIRE
TIBET
AFGHANISTAN
BALUCHISTAN
SEISTAN
BOKHARA
PAMIR
CHINESE TURKESTAN
KASHMIR
NEPAL
BHUTAN
ASSAM
SZE-CHUAN
YUN-NAN
TONG-KING
FRENCH
INDO-CHINA
BURMAH
SIAM
INDIA
Himalaya Mts
Hindu Kush
Karakorum Mts
Kuen Lun Mts
Altyn Tagh
Merv
Herat
Kabul
Kashgar
Yarkand
Khotan
Gilgit
Chitral
Jellalabad
Peshawar
Ghazni
Kandahar
Lahore
Quetta
Kelat
Nushki
Delhi
Lhasa
Shigatse
Khatmandu
Darjeeling
Calcutta
Bombay
Karachi
Rangoon
Mandalay
Bhamo
Hanoi
Yun-nan
Chung-king
Manipur
Ganges
Brahmaputra
Mekong
Salween
Irrawaddy
Godavari
Narbuda
Chambal
Jumna
Sutlej
Indus
Oxus
Helmund
Merv Rud
Tsangpo

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CHAPTER XXVII

AFGHANISTAN AS A MILITARY STATE

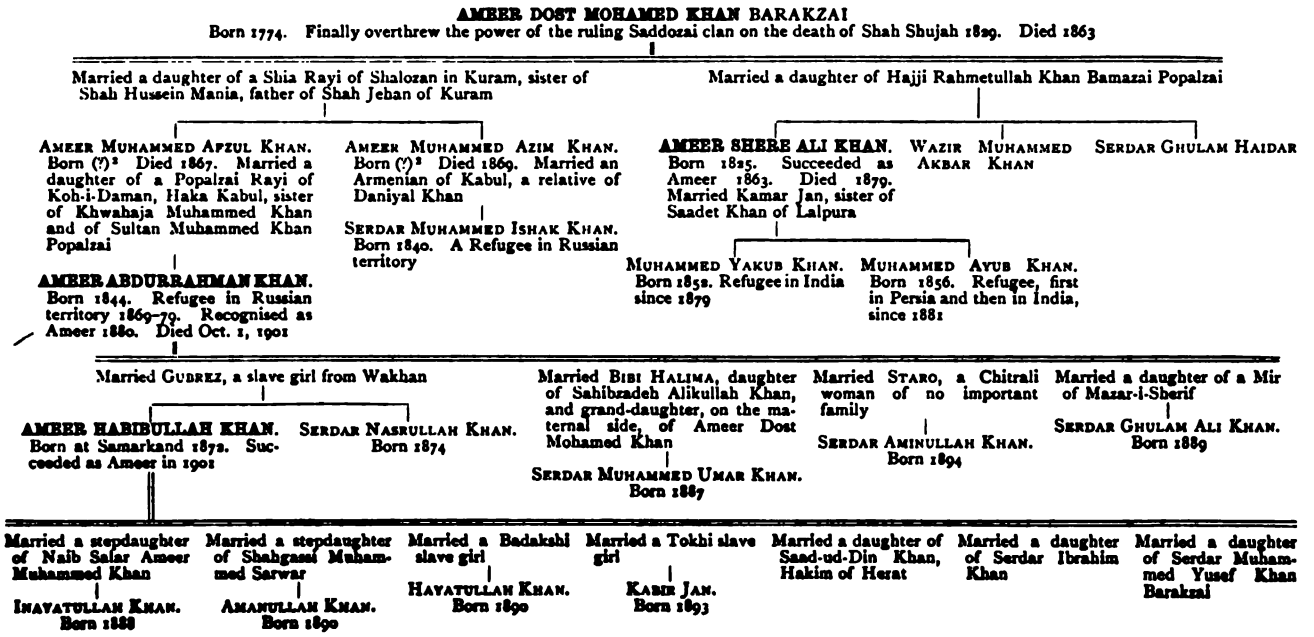
IT may still be too early to assume that Habibullah has finally overcome the dangers which beset the path of a new ruler in a country such as Afghanistan, and he has yet to show the stuff of which he is made. But the fact that the internal peace of Afghanistan has remained unbroken since his succession to the throne bears, at any rate, very striking testimony to the constructive statesmanship of his father and to the solidity of the work he achieved. Two years have now elapsed since Abdurrahman died, and the authority of Kabul over the tribes remains in all appearances as unskaken as when the heavy hand of the old Ameer was still upon them. Abdurrahman's life work has survived, and unless his successor destroys it by mistakes of his own making, its enduring effects must be such as to make it worth while to recall briefly what that life work was.

The great change which the late Ameer wrought during his twenty years' reign may be described roughly as the transformation of Afghanistan from a feudal into a despotically-centralised military state. Abdurrahman became in fact as well as in name the first Ameer of Afghanistan. Before him there were only Ameers of Kabul, and their position towards the great

tribal chieftains of Afghanistan was not unlike that of King John towards his barons, or of Runjeet Singh in his early days towards the Sikh chiefs. An Ameer of Kabul was merely the head, sometimes merely the figure-head, of a confederacy of powerful clans. For twenty years Abdurrahman applied all the ruthless energies of his masterful nature to the task of curbing the power of the great Afghan tribes, who were a continual menace to the supremacy of Kabul, and consolidating his own authority so that it should pass undiminished to his successor. The chiefs of every rival clan were either obliterated or otherwise rendered harmless, until there remained not, it would seem, in the whole of Afghanistan, a single leader capable of heading a great rebellion. Within its frontiers there was none left to challenge the Ameer. Ayub Khan and Ishak Khan were merely fugitives living in exile, the one on British and the other on Russian soil, and though either of them could no doubt always have rallied a number of malcontents to his standard, he would have been regarded with suspicion by the bulk of the people as the agent and tool of England or of Russia. The means by which the great Ameer achieved his purpose were not those which commend themselves to the humanitarian conceptions of Western civilisation, but they were those with which his own people had been familiar, and which his predecessors had practised with more or less thoroughness and success from times immemorial.

"The virtues of God are pardon and pity; they never were mine;
They have never been ours, in a kingdom all stained with the blood of our kin,
Where the brothers embrace in the war-field, and the reddest sword must win."

PEDIGREE OF THE AMEER OF AFGHANISTAN[1] (1903)


AMEER DOST MOHAMED KHAN BARAKZAI
Born 1774. Finally overthrew the power of the ruling Saddozai clan on the death of Shah Shujah 1829. Died 1863
Married a daughter of a Shia Rayi of Shalozan in Kuram, sister of Shah Hussein Mania, father of Shah Jehan of Kuram
Married a daughter of Hajji Rahmetullah Khan Bamazai Popalzai
AMEER MUHAMMED AFZUL KHAN. Born (?)[2] Died 1867. Married a daughter of a Popalzai Rayi of Koh-i-Daman, Haka Kabul, sister of Khwahaja Muhammed Khan and of Sultan Muhammed Khan Popalzai
AMEER MUHAMMED AZIM KHAN. Born (?)[2] Died 1869. Married an Armenian of Kabul, a relative of Daniyal Khan
SERDAR MUHAMMED ISHAK KHAN. Born 1840. A Refugee in Russian territory
AMEER SHERE ALI KHAN. Born 1825. Succeeded as Ameer 1863. Died 1879. Married Kamar Jan, sister of Saadet Khan of Lalpura
WAZIR MUHAMMED AKBAR KHAN
SERDAR GHULAM HAIDAR
MUHAMMED YAKUB KHAN. Born 1852. Refugee in India since 1879
MUHAMMED AYUB KHAN. Born 1856. Refugee, first in Persia and then in India, since 1881
AMEER ABDURRAHMAN KHAN. Born 1844. Refugee in Russian territory 1869–79. Recognised as Ameer 1880. Died Oct. 1, 1901
Married GUDREZ, a slave girl from Wakhan
AMEER HABIBULLAH KHAN. Born at Samarkand 1872. Succeeded as Ameer in 1901
SERDAR NASRULLAH KHAN. Born 1874
Married BIBI HALIMA, daughter of Sahibzadeh Alikullah Khan, and grand-daughter, on the maternal side, of Ameer Dost Mohamed Khan
SERDAR MUHAMMED UMAR KHAN. Born 1887
Married STARO, a Chitrali woman of no important family
SERDAR AMINULLAH KHAN. Born 1894
Married a daughter of a Mir of Mazar-i-Sherif
SERDAR GHULAM ALI KHAN. Born 1889
Married a stepdaughter of Naib Safar Ameer Muhammed Khan
INAYATULLAH KHAN. Born 1888
Married a stepdaughter of Shahgassi Muhammed Sarwar
AMANULLAH KHAN. Born 1890
Married a Badakshi slave girl
HAYATULLAH KHAN. Born 1890
Married a Tokhi slave girl
KABIR JAN. Born 1893
Married a daughter of Saad-ud-Din Khan, Hakim of Herat
Married a daughter of Serdar Ibrahim Khan
Married a daughter of Serdar Muhammed Yusef Khan Barakzai

[1] Only the more important members of the ruling family are included in this pedigree.
[2] Both these sons of Dost Mohamed were considerably older than Shere Ali.

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An autocrat by temperament, Abdurrahman Khan was also, unquestionably, a great Afghan patriot, and if he shrank at nothing to tame the refractory spirit of his fierce tribesmen, it was not merely for the gratification of his own personal ambition, but, as he once admitted to one of the few Europeans whom he sometimes admitted to his confidence, because he realised that the independence of Afghanistan could never survive in present circumstances such another period of internal strife and turmoil as followed the death of Dost Mahommed in 1863, the last Afghan ruler who had died in peaceful possession of his throne. The most potent instrument, besides his own genius, by which this great transformation was effected was the standing army, which was during his reign for the first time created, controlled, and paid directly by the Ameer, in substitution for the old feudal levies, which yielded to Kabul only an indirect and uncertain allegiance conditioned upon the loyalty of the tribal chiefs to their overlord. The whole of his policy was shaped to the pursuit of this one end. He struck down his rivals and chastised the tribes with implacable severity. He ruled his people with a rod of iron. He created huge trade monopolies to feed his Treasury and defray the expenses of his army. It was to provide his army with modern weapons that practically the whole of the subsidies were devoted which he received from the Indian Government—at first twelve, and after the Durand Agreement of 1893 eighteen lakhs per annum. It was to increase the mobility of his army that he built roads such as now cross the Hindu Kush from Kabul into North-Western Afghanistan and towards the Oxus, and from Jellalabad to Badakshan, in one direction, and in another into Kafiristan. Every other

question was subordinated to the one great purpose he had in view. That he was not indifferent to frontier questions *per se* he took care to show us when the Durand boundary between Afghan and British territory had to be traced out, not on paper, but on the spot. But the Penjdeh incident left him cold; he showed little enthusiasm for the strategic frontier we secured for him on the Pamirs; for he dreaded international complications which would have delayed and hampered his work of internal reconstruction.

In short, as the result of twenty years' effort he was able to bequeath to his son a new Afghanistan widely different from the loose aggregate of unruly tribes which constituted his precarious kingdom when, after ten years' exile, he first set foot again in Kabul in 1880. Whatever difficulties Habibullah may still have to contend with, it may safely be said that they will be rather of his own creation than the outcome of organic conditions such as his predecessors had invariably to deal with on their accession to the Durani throne. He found the whole machinery of government in working order, and his father, who during his last years had delegated to him an increasing share of his authority, had initiated him, at least, into the technical working of it. The weak point of the late Ameer's system is that he has made Afghanistan a "one man show." No one in the country has any power whatever except the Ameer himself. Whether Abdurrahman succeeded in imparting also to his son something of the genius which, in Oriental countries especially, constitutes the indispensable driving power of so highly centralised a system of government yet remains to be seen. Abdurrahman was one of the greatest men of his time, and he was able to run the machine he created

single-handed. But what dynasty can show a succession of really great men? Habibullah has not yet shown that he is cast in the same mould as his father. It is doubtful whether he has yet really shaken himself free from the excessive uxoriousness in which he at first indulged. Certainly not all of the numerous marriages he has contracted have been *mariages de raison*, and one, at least, of those in which he, presumably, consulted his heart alone is reputed to have been very unpopular. But if he has shown himself more prone to self-indulgence and indolence than the late Ameer, the vigour he has recently displayed in dealing with the turbulent elements which must for a long time continue to survive amongst a population so naturally prone to lawlessness as the Afghans, proves that he has no rooted objection to the methods which however repugnant they may be to our Western ideas, proved undeniably effective in Abdurrahman's hands. It is certainly worthy of note that, so far, the rumours which have from time to time circulated as to impending trouble at Kabul have been mainly concerned with the growth of dangerous rivalries within his own immediate family rather than with any symptoms of disloyalty amongst the tribes. His second brother, Nasrullah, is reputed to be active and ambitious, and a faction of increasing influence appears to be attaching itself to the fortunes of another and younger brother, Muhammed Umar, who enjoys over his elders the advantage of royal descent through his mother as well as through his father, and who, though still a mere lad, is being carefully trained by his mother to fulfil worthily the lofty aspirations she entertains for his future. How far family dissensions, should they ever break out into open conflict, would revive the

old intertribal strife, or how far they might provoke new dangers by dividing the army into hostile factions, it is hard to say. Habibullah is admittedly the most popular of all the late Ameer's sons, and in case of an outbreak in Kabul and fighting amongst the brothers a large majority of the tribesmen, far and near, would probably stand by the present Ameer. This might not be the case with the troops, some of whose leaders are more or less closely connected with one or other of his brothers. Ameer Muhammed Khan, who commands the forces at Kabul, is a father-in-law of Habibullah, and therefore presumably bound to his cause. But Mir Ala Khan, who, though no longer actively employed, has still some influence with the army, and Bahawal Khan, who commands at Asmara, are believed to favour Nasrullah Khan. On the other hand, men like Muhammed Hussein Khan and some other high official and non-official Serdars of Kabul are suspected of leaning towards young Muhammed Umar. The Uzbek chiefs of Turkestan, who are not Afghans, might possibly try to set up Gholam Ali Khan as their ruler. But these are speculative contingencies, and for the present the important fact remains, that, for the first time for at least a century, the succession to the throne of Afghanistan has been peacefully effected.

The great change wrought during Abdurrahman's reign in the internal condition of Afghanistan has naturally been accompanied by a proportionate change in her position as a factor in the problem of Central Asian politics. We have learnt more than once, at heavy cost to ourselves, the power of resistance which such a brave and warlike race as the Afghans possesses in the inhospitable desert and mountain fastnesses that form so large a part of their patrimony. Yet the

Afghans who faced us in battle in 1878 and in 1880, as well as in 1842, were but a heterogeneous collection of ill-armed and ill-trained tribesmen whom the bond of common enmity to the infidel invader alone brought into temporary community of action. To-day the natural defences of Afghanistan are as formidable as ever, and behind them is arrayed a far more formidable fighting force, organised on a much larger scale and on sounder lines, equipped in great part with modern weapons, and trained to some extent, at least, in the art of modern warfare.

With regard to the constitution of the Ameer's army no authoritative information has ever been made public, and I believe that the estimates which, so far as I am aware, have hitherto been published are considerably below the mark. The following details have been gathered from sources which I have every reason to regard as trustworthy. The peace strength of the Ameer's regular army must be estimated at between 85,000 and 90,000 men of all arms. It consists of 80 regiments of infantry, varying a great deal in strength, but numbering on an average 700 men; 40 regiments of cavalry about 400 men strong; and 100 batteries of artillery of 6 guns and 100 men each. There is also a picked force of four regiments of infantry, each 1,000 men strong, and three of cavalry, each 800 men strong, which forms the Ameer's bodyguard. In addition to the regular forces there is a force of 30,000 men performing gendarmerie and police duties, and another force of about the same strength, of whom 20,000 are unmounted and 10,000 mounted, belonging nominally to the Khans and organised on a tribal basis. But they are not actually controlled by the tribal chiefs. They resemble the Imperial Service

troops of the native rulers in India, with this difference, however, that they are permanently employed on the same duties as the Ameer's regular troops in distant parts of the country, generally far removed from their own districts of origin.

In time of war every adult male Afghan, unless physically altogether incapacitated, is expected to join the Ameer's standards, and as it is the natural propensity of all Afghans to take up arms in case of a disturbance, few of them would fail to answer to the call. As a matter of fact every young Afghan has a rifle of his own, and knows more or less how to use it. Moreover, the Ameer has, it is believed, a sufficient stock of arms and ammunition to supply the whole male population. The arms at present in the hands of the tribesmen are not of a very modern type, but most of them are at any rate breechloaders. The Ameer's own factories are said to be able to turn out two guns and 100 rifles with the necessary ammunition every week, and there can be no doubt that they have produced for many years past under the superintendence of skilled Europeans very large quantities, not only of rifles and field-guns, but of heavy ordnance, whilst there has been at the same time a constant importation of all the newest types of armament from Europe and especially from Germany. But even if the Ameer is in a position to-day to arm in case of need the whole male population of Afghanistan, it does not follow that he would consider it politic to do so. Even now he would probably not care to put the loyalty of all the tribes to the same test. The late Ameer raised a force of 400,000 *Alijaris*, or tribal levies, against the Hazaras, and though they actually started on the expedition only a portion of them were employed when it came to fighting. Some

competent authorities hold that Abdurrahman was not indulging in a mere idle boast when he talked about placing 1,000,000 fighting men in the field in the event of a great war. But the view generally taken by those best acquainted with the situation in Afghanistan is that Habibullah would not attempt to raise more than 300,000 *Alijaris* for a campaign against a foreign power. Of these 200,000 might take the field in combination with 100,000 regular and irregular troops, while 50,000 regulars and irregulars and 100,000 *Alijaris* would be left to maintain the Ameer's authority at Kabul and in the provinces. The whole of both field and garrison forces could probably be armed with modern weapons, and though the tribal levies have not had the same military training as the standing army, they are not inferior to the latter in rough fighting qualities, or in mobility and endurance, or even in the elementary tactics of mountain warfare.

The commissariat and transport requirements of such an army are naturally very simple compared with those of an army organised on Western lines. Abdurrahman is reported to have himself said: "Praise be to God, the Afghans are such a strong, healthy, hearty people that they can run over the mountains of their country nearly as fast as horses, carrying at the same time their rifles, ammunition, tents, and food for a few days on their backs." Nevertheless the old Ameer did not trust merely to the broad shoulders and stout sinews of his soldiers. He always kept something like 50,000 pack-horses and mules ready for transport service, and large stores of grain for the troops. The weak point of the Afghan army is presumably its officers. Not that they would lack to-day any more than in the past the fighting qualities of their race. But the larger the number

of troops they would have to handle, the more they would probably suffer in contact with the forces of a civilised power from the want of any but the most elementary training in the modern science of war. The late Ameer set his face resolutely against either sending young Afghans abroad to be trained in the military schools of the West, or importing foreign officers into Afghanistan to act as military instructors. Habibullah shows no signs of departing from his father's policy in this respect. No doubt under the stress of war the Afghans will produce military leaders of great capacity as they have done before, but an efficient corps of regimental officers, especially for the scientific branches of the army, and, above all, an efficient staff cannot be extemporised nowadays on the battle-field against an enemy who starts with the initial advantage of possessing them.

The expenditure incurred in the creation, equipment, and maintenance of the new Afghan army, as it exists to-day, has unquestionably been very heavy, and Abdurrahman admitted as much. But the strain which it is supposed to have placed upon the Afghan Treasury would appear to have been exaggerated. It has certainly not proved so far intolerable. For in consequence of certain differences with the Indian Government, the Kabul Government, both under the late and under the present Ameer, has allowed considerable arrears of subsidy to accumulate untouched in the hands of the Indian Government, and seems to be in no hurry to secure their release. Of late, and in consequence, perhaps, of our experiences in the Transvaal, there has been a disposition on the part of the Indian authorities to exercise more control over the transit of war materials from Europe into Afghanistan. But,

in view of our treaty engagements with the Ameer, this is a very delicate matter, and even if all further importation ceased, Afghan armaments have already assumed such proportions that an invading army would find itself confronted to-day in Afghanistan with a task at least as formidable as that which for nearly three years taxed the military resources of our Empire in South Africa. It would have to contend with natural difficulties as great, and with an enemy as mobile and as well armed, and perhaps even more fiercely tenacious of his independence.

CHAPTER XXVIII

GREAT BRITAIN, RUSSIA, AND AFGHANISTAN

THE transformation of Afghanistan into the highly centralised and essentially military state, which Abdurrahman has bequeathed to the present Ameer, is a fact with which the neighbours of Afghanistan must reckon. For ourselves, so long as Habibullah abides by the engagements he has inherited from his father, it is a fact which in itself need cause us no apprehension. The maintenance of a strong and friendly Afghanistan as warden of the passes which have served from times immemorial as the highways of invasion from the North into the plains of Hindustan is now one of the fundamental principles of British-Indian statesmanship. Whether the Kabul-Kandahar line should or should not be still regarded as the real line of defence of our Indian Empire, so far as the north-west frontier is concerned, there is a general consensus that, even from the purely military point of view, we could wish for nothing better than that the Afghans should prove capable of holding it themselves, and should hold it themselves at least until they of their own free will invoke our co-operation. If a serious crisis were to occur to-morrow, involving a conflict between the two great European Empires in Asia, there is every reason to believe that the Afghans could and would offer an uncompromising resistance to any

AFGHANS IN THE KHAIBAR (p. 301)

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attempt on the part of Russia to force her way through Afghanistan. The late Ameer never left room for any doubt as to what his decision would be if ever he were compelled to choose between Russia and England, and not only is there no reason to believe that the present Ameer's choice would be different, but even if there were, it would certainly be a very dangerous experiment for him to attempt to depart abruptly from the policy laid down by his father, and endorsed by the vast majority of the chiefs and people of Afghanistan. But the issue is not likely to be raised in such a direct and simple form.

Russia realises as fully as we do the change that has taken place during the last two decades in the forces of resistance which Afghanistan can oppose to any foreign invader. She has herself, it is true, during the same period materially strengthened her strategic position on the Afghan border. Her Trans-Caspian Railway, which now extends from Khrasnovodsk to Tashkend, has been carried down to the very frontier of Afghanistan by a branch line to Kushk, and railway materials are stored there which would enable her at any moment to push it on to Herat as quickly as we could push our own line on from Chaman to Kandahar. But this no longer satisfies her. The Trans-Caspian line is not connected with the main system either in Europe or in Asia, and the passage across the Caspian involves transhipment at either end. She is engaged at present in repairing this lacuna by the construction of a new line, which will connect the eastern section of the Trans-Caspian Railway at Tashkend with the Siberian Railway. The new line starts from Orenburg (which is already connected with Samara on the main line from Moscow to Vladivostok and Port Arthur),

and runs through Orsk, Irghiz, Kazalinsk, Perovsk, and Turkestan to Tashkend. Its completion may be looked for within the next two years, and then the Russians will have two alternative routes by which from the east, as well as from the west, they can feed their strategic base at Kushk, in the event of military operations against Afghanistan. I do not wish to convey that this new railway is being built solely or chiefly for strategic purposes. It forms, no doubt, part of M. Witte's scheme for the economic development of Asiatic Russia, and especially of the great cotton-producing region of Central Asia. But the effect of its construction upon the strategic situation must not be overlooked. The natural advantages which Russia already enjoys are sufficiently great. While Southern Afghanistan is protected by a series of mountain barriers, Northern Afghanistan lies open to easy invasion along almost the whole length of the Russo-Afghan frontier. From the valleys of the Heri-Rud and the Murghab the province of Herat can be overrun at any moment by Russian troops, and from the banks of the Oxus Balkh and Badakshan are equally at their mercy. Ishak Khan, the great-grandson of Dost Muhammed, is now merely a harmless refugee on Russian soil, but in the van of a conquering Russian army he might once more become a dangerous pretender, not without a following amongst the tribesmen of Northern Afghanistan. Nevertheless, though she could count upon easy successes in the North, it may be doubted whether Russia would feel inclined in any circumstances deliberately to challenge the defensive resources of Afghanistan. That she naturally wishes to be in a position to strike effectively in an emergency at Afghanistan, and through Afghanistan at us, may

be taken for granted. But Russian expansion has wisely learnt to seek the line of least resistance, and that line is certainly not at present to be found in Afghanistan, but further west, in Persia, or further east, in the outlying provinces of the Chinese Empire.

Patience, tenacity, and self-restraint have become the dominant characteristics of Russian policy, together with astonishing flexibility in the adaptation of new and varying methods to the pursuit of unchanging aims. The last Russo-Turkish war seems to have permanently driven home upon her the lesson which the Crimean war had already taught her. Since then she has substituted for the old policy of overt conquest by force of arms that of subtle conquest by pacific absorption. The results which she has thus achieved are already a splendid monument to the wisdom of that statesmanlike evolution, and one can well understand that she should seek for an opportunity of applying the same policy in Afghanistan, which has already borne such admirable fruits at Teheran and Peking. For that, it may safely be asserted, is the object which she has primarily in view in endeavouring to open up once more direct relations with the Government of Kabul. For this very reason also it behoves us to exercise the greatest caution in dealing with the overtures she may make to us in this direction. We stand on solid ground in refusing to release her from the assurances she has repeatedly given to us that she considers Afghanistan entirely outside her sphere of action.

Kabul in existing circumstances is the very last place which we should willingly suffer to be transformed into a centre of diplomatic rivalry. We have ourselves refrained from maintaining any European representative at the Ameer's Court, because we have good grounds

for believing that the obvious advantages of such representation would be outweighed by less obvious, but at bottom far more serious, risks. A native Indian official may suffice for the ordinary purposes of communication between the Indian Government and the Ameer, though his position is certainly not a very dignified one. He is generally a very respectable regimental officer selected from the native army, but for that very reason he is seldom a man of any great political experience. He is treated at Kabul with all outward signs of deference, but the Ameer sees to it that his Afghans hold as little intercourse with him as possible. The Ameer, on the other hand, has a Kabuli representative at the seat of government in India, who moves about freely and is subjected to no restrictions whatever. Not content with this, Abdurrahman moved heaven and earth to have a representative of his own in London, who could communicate direct with the Imperial Government over the Viceroy's head. Afghans of all classes travel and reside wherever they like in India, whilst if one of our officers is caught straying a mile or two over the Afghan boundary, he is immediately arrested and treated often with great indignity. Only last winter Colonel A. C. Yate, in command at Chaman, and brother to the Agent-General for Baluchistan, was made prisoner by a party of Afghans, whilst taking a morning ride, unarmed, across the plain, in the course of which he had trespassed into Afghan territory, and conveyed to the fort at Baldak Spin, where he was detained for some weeks within sight of his own lines, until the vigorous remonstrances of the Viceroy obtained orders from Kabul for his release. Such a state of things may be just tolerable in existing circumstances, but it would be quite intolerable if a Russian

representative were accredited at Kabul, and Russians were allowed to go to and fro in Afghanistan.

It is true that Russia avowedly limits her desire for direct intercourse with Kabul to commercial and frontier matters. But, without seeking to impugn the sincerity of that limitation, it implies a serious departure from the Russian pledge to desist even from the exchange of mere letters of ceremony with Kabul, and one may well ask how the line is to be drawn nowadays between commercial and political relations when Russian policy more especially has shown in other quarters such conspicuous success in using the leverage of commercial enterprise for the promotion of political ascendency. In reply to a communication from the Russian Government proposing that direct relations should be established between Russia and Afghanistan with regard to frontier matters, such relations, however, to have no political character, the British Government were compelled to intimate, as they did in very courteous terms, that they could not frame any proposals to be laid before the Ameer without some more precise explanation in regard to the method which the Russian Government desired to see adopted for the exchange of communications between the frontier officials on both sides. To this intimation no answer appears to have been vouchsafed from St. Petersburg. The demand had been put forward at a time when Russia was perhaps inclined to exaggerate the significance of our military reverses in South Africa, and expected to find the British Government in a more yielding mood. But it must not be supposed that because Russia has not returned to the charge in London she has abandoned the purpose she had in view. The report which came down from Peshawar,

in September, 1902, that the Ameer had read in full Durbar a direct communication from the Russian Government, together with a message to the Governor of Afghan Turkestan from the Russian Governor of the adjoining province expressing a desire for direct commercial relations across the Oxus, was never contradicted from Russia. On the contrary, a semi-official statement was not long afterwards issued at St. Petersburg to the effect that it had never been the intention of the Russian Government to make the establishment of direct relations with Kabul a matter of negotiation with Great Britain, but merely to put on record that it was the desire and purpose of Russia to establish such relations at such time as she might think proper. Since then there have been further incidents to show that she is by no means disposed to relax her efforts in that direction. The latest of these incidents occurred in August, 1903, when the Governor of Russian Turkestan sent back some deserters from the Afghan army, who had escaped into Russian territory with a message of which the significance seems far to exceed the importance of the act that gave occasion to it. The Russian Governor wrote: "As the Tsar and the Ameer are amicably disposed the one to the other, his Imperial Majesty has given orders that every effort shall be made to continue the friendly relations existing between Russia and Afghanistan. As representative of the Tsar I am directed to send back all refugees and evil-doers who come to my territory from Afghanistan. This is the reason why I sent back to you these eleven soldiers with their arms. Please be kind enough to communicate this to the Ameer." One feels curious to know what the Russian Government would say if the Viceroy of India were to send a message to the Ameer of

Bokhara expressing his desire for friendly relations with that potentate. Russia would rightly resent it as a demonstrative attempt on our part to interfere outside our sphere of influence. We have equally the right to resent any such attempt on her part to interfere outside her sphere of influence. Our relations with Afghanistan are far too delicate, and liable to far too many untoward accidents, for us to tolerate the gratuitous importation of a foreign ferment. No doubt the present system under which every little question that arises along the Russo-Afghan frontier has to be referred backwards and forwards through a long series of departmental channels from Central Asia to St. Petersburg, from St. Petersburg to London, from London to Calcutta, and from Calcutta to Kabul, is cumbrous and irksome. But there would be an end to all international arrangements if they could be determined as soon as any one of their incidental consequences proved inconvenient to either of the contracting parties. So long, at any rate, as the present uncertainty subsists with regard to the aims of Russian policy in Asia it would be folly on our part to surrender one of the few advantages secured to us by that *status quo*, to which we cling in other quarters with pathetic fidelity, even when it has become a mere empty formula which serves only to disguise a serious disturbance of the balance of power to our own detriment.

Though neither in this connection, nor with reference to other questions, is there any reason to doubt at the present moment the loyalty of the Ameer or of his people, our relations with them are, and always must be, of a very delicate character. To begin with, the engagements entered into on both sides are deplorably lacking in precision. Habibullah has at least

hinted that he does not regard the obligations personally contracted by his father as necessarily binding upon him. Another curious circumstance is that, whereas he continues in his statement of accounts to debit the Indian Government regularly with the instalments of subsidy accruing to his credit, he, like his father during the last years of his reign, has not drawn a single rupee on the very respectable amount which these arrears now represent. On the other hand, he has shown no disposition to question the fundamental principle of his father's policy—namely, that he is bound to be guided by the Indian Government in all matters of foreign relations, and that we in turn are bound to defend him against foreign aggression. But an indefinite undertaking of this kind leaves room for plenty of difference of opinion as to the manner and occasion of fulfilment, and, unfortunately, the forward policy of British ministers between 1878 and 1881 and the backward policy of their successors immediately afterwards have equally contributed to shake the confidence of the Afghans in the sincerity of our determination both to respect their independence ourselves and to protect it against others. So jealous are they of their independence and so prone to suspicion that they might conceivably, even in a great emergency, resent the appearance of a British force to co-operate with them quite as keenly as they might, on the other hand, resent our non-intervention. Yet circumstances might arise in which it would be absolutely impossible for our action to be determined solely by the caprice of Kabul. Even if, in the event of Russian aggression, Kabul were to invite our military co-operation, the policy of rigid exclusion which it has hitherto maintained towards us must add considerably to the difficulties of co-operation. We are

pledged to help the Ameer in Afghanistan, if necessary, but he will not allow us in the meantime even to see the country where we may have to fight. As it is, we have and can have very little information about it. We have the surveys and reports made during the last Afghan war, but they hardly go beyond the Kabul-Ghazni-Kandahar line. Of the country which lies to the North, including the Hindu-Kush, the Kuh-i-Baba, the Parapomisus mountains—our future theatre of war, should it ever come to war—we know next to nothing, and there is no Intelligence Department in the Afghan army which would be able to supply us with even the topographical information needed for successful operations in the field.

It may be urged, rightly enough, that if the Afghan does not trust us, he distrusts Russia even more. But he is proverbially fickle—he says of himself *Afghân be imân* ("the Afghan is without faith or honour")—and, like all Orientals, he is prone to worship material force. It is impossible to regard from this point of view without some apprehension the effect which the steady growth of Russian ascendency in other parts of Asia must in the long run produce upon his fatalistic temperament. Whilst the consolidation of British rule in India proceeds on lines of peaceful evolution which he is scarcely competent to appreciate, he can appraise at its full value the visible expansion of Russia's power across Asia from the Caspian to the Pacific. The Afghan is essentially a fighting man, and, though the army which Abdurrahman created has in the main so far made for peace by securing the internal tranquillity of Afghanistan, even the old Ameer discovered in the latter part of his reign not only that it was necessary to keep it occupied, but that it was not easy to find suitable

occupation for it. The discipline of a standing army in such a country as Afghanistan is apt to get lax in the idle times of peace. Under an Oriental military despotism the army exists for active fighting, and all its instincts rebel against long periods of inaction. It wants the excitement and, above all, the opportunities of individual aggrandisement and enrichment which active service alone furnishes. For a long time Abdurrahman kept his army fairly well occupied in putting down all his own rivals and subjugating the tribes whose loyalty he had cause to suspect. When that was accomplished, Kafiristan, with its "pagan" tribes, offered another outlet for the martial energies of the Afghan Mussulmans. But in proportion as the successive delimitations of boundaries and spheres of influence have diminished the area of doubtful ownership within which the military appetite of the Afghan commanders could be gratified without any serious risk of external complications, the task of providing occupation for the Afghan army has become more and more difficult, and with the maintenance of internal peace that difficulty must go on increasing. The sops which Habibullah has from time to time thrown to his army, in the shape of increased pay and improved rations, show that he himself is alive to the difficulty, but measures of that kind can hardly be regarded as more than temporary makeshifts. One is bound to bear in mind in this connection that the fighting instincts of the Afghan have always prompted him in the past to look towards the south rather than the north. The plains of India, which his fathers repeatedly ransacked, are still to him the legendary land of conquest and booty, and if once he came to believe that we were powerless to arrest the forces of Russian gravitation, he might well be tempted,

by the prospect of a share in such stakes as Russia would spread before him, to exchange a losing for a winning partner.

These issues, it may be argued, are, however vital, still remote, and it is not remote issues, vital though they may be, that always govern the relations of civilised powers, let alone of an untutored people like the Afghans. Unfortunately, even our everyday relations with Afghanistan are not free from disturbing elements. In Abdurrahman's time questions arose concerning the frontier between British India and Afghanistan, and more especially questions concerning that wild belt of tribal territory which separates British Indian territory under direct British administration from Afghan territory. They sometimes became sufficiently acute to put a severe strain upon Anglo-Afghan relations, though, thanks to the self-restraint of the Indian Government and the shrewdness of the old Ameer himself, the tension was never allowed to reach breaking-point. It is, perhaps, of no great importance that to the present day the Ameer maintains the practical protest which his father entered against our occupation of New Chaman, by forbidding his people to use the railway from the terminus at the northern foot-hills of the Khwaja Amran and compelling every caravan that trades between Kandahar and Quetta to journey laboriously over the mountain pass and unload its goods only at the first station on the south side of the great tunnel which pierces the range. There, at least, the frontier is definitely delimitated; but there is still a wide gap to the north of the Khaibar pass along the Mohmand border towards the Hindu Kush which awaits demarcation, through no fault of ours. Delimitation is shortly to be resumed on this section, and as the Ameer has probably realised by

this time that procrastination is a game that does not always pay, it may be hoped that the task of the Anglo-Afghan Commissioners will be completed without unnecessary delay.

Amongst the wild hillsmen who inhabit the borderland for hundreds of miles along the Anglo-Afghan frontier, and especially in the eastern portion, explosive materials abound. Most of them are closely connected by racial as well as religious ties with the Afghans. Many of them dwell partly across the Afghan border, or migrate periodically backwards and forwards across the border. All of them turn naturally to Kabul whenever they get themselves into difficulties with the Indian Government or grow apprehensive of its intentions. On the other hand, they offer Kabul a perpetual field for the cultivation of those arts of political intrigue which always thrive in an Oriental court. Abdurrahman was himself not proof against such temptations, though he was careful never to let them carry him out of his depth. Will Habibullah be able to exercise the same self-control? It is not given to everybody to discourse platonically upon the merits of a *Jehad*, to pose as a leader of Islam before an admiring audience of bigoted *Mullahs*, to turn on and switch off the current of fanaticism flowing amongst unruly tribes—in a word, to play with fire in a powder magazine, as Abdurrahman sometimes did, without ever kindling a conflagration. It is certainly fortunate that Habibullah's first attempts at dalliance with the frontier tribes have failed on their own merits. It was not wise of him to challenge direct comparison by trying to raise frontier levies on the same lines and from the same tribes as ours. The robes of honour and other more substantial rewards he somewhat ostentatiously bestowed on various Pathans

IN THE KHAIBAR PASS (p. 321)

AN AFGHAN CARAVAN (p. 321)

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who had distinguished themselves in raiding British outposts and such-like deeds of frontier prowess no doubt flattered the vanity of the tribesmen. But when it came to business they soon discovered the difference between the high-flown promises of Kabul and the solid advantages of regular pay and fair treatment all round which the Khaibar Rifles and other tribal levies are assured of under the British flag. The Ameer's new recruits soon melted away, and even without the admonition transmitted to them through their elders by Colonel Deane, the Commissioner and Agent to the Governor-General at Peshawar, they would probably not have been in a hurry to repeat the experiment. The death of the Hadda Mullah at the end of 1902 doubtless also made for tranquillity, for, though there will certainly be plenty of *Mullahs* to claim his mantle, none can succeed at once to the prestige which that holy but turbulent person had acquired. One of our great difficulties in dealing with the tribes is that, whenever their turbulence compels us to chastise them and they find themselves hard pressed, they can always escape through the back-door into Afghanistan. Had we retained the Ningrahar valley up to and including Jellalabad after the last Afghan war, we should have got permanently behind the Afridis, Orakzais, Mohmands, Swatis, Bunerwalis, etc., and cut them off from Afghan territory. Their complete and permanent subjugation would then have been only a question of a comparatively short time. But we allowed that opportunity to slip by, and there were doubtless strong arguments against taking advantage of it. Now, for the time being, we must make the best of things as they are. We have set ourselves the perhaps more difficult task of winning over the tribes by consent. The policy laid down by

CHAPTER XXIX

THE NORTH-EAST FRONTIER OF INDIA

THE north-west frontier has always bulked so large in the public mind that we are apt to forget that India has also a north-east frontier. This is due partly, no doubt, to the fact that the natural defences of India are even more formidable to the north-east than to the north-west, but partly also to the fact that India has been able hitherto to regard her neighbours beyond the Himalayas in Chinese Turkestan and Tibet as practically negligible quantities. The great mountain barrier which stretches down from the point where the British, Russian, and Chinese Empires meet on the very roof of the world to the big bend of the Brahmaputra will certainly not grow less formidable in the future, nor need we apprehend any recrudescence of aggressive vitality amongst the sparse population of the outlying dependencies of the Chinese Empire on the other side of the Himalayas. But what we may, and probably shall have to, reckon with, ultimately, is the extension in those regions of the same foreign influence which has moved down so rapidly, during the last half-century, towards our north-west frontier. Russian ascendency is already established in Chinese Turkestan, and even the exclusiveness of Tibet has begun to give way to the relentless pressure of Russia's power. The ex-

pansive energy which every power, possessed of a higher civilisation, develops almost automatically in contact with more primitive organisms is a phenomenon which can be witnessed all over the world to-day. That the expansive energy of Russia tends to bring her constantly into closer proximity to the seat of British power in Asia is, no doubt, from the point of our own convenience very regrettable, but that is no reason for ignoring it; and though it need not cause any exaggerated alarm it certainly calls for vigilance. In this connection the north-east frontier of India presents many points of interest and some of no slight potential importance, and without some reference to them any survey of the problems with which we are being confronted as an Asiatic Power would be incomplete.

As on the north-west, British India is to a very great extent covered on the north-east by a fringe of territory not immediately subject to British administration. From Chitral and Gilghit, which are now the northernmost outposts of the British *raj*, down to Assam, with the exception of one small break where, between Kashmir and Nepal, the British district of Kumaon stretches up into the heart of the Himalayas, the highland valleys which run down from the watershed of that great mountain barrier to the plains of Hindustan form a continuous if often narrow belt of native territory over 1,500 miles in length, which under varying limitations has remained subject to its own ruling chiefs.

Kashmir is the northernmost of the native states forming this belt. Its northern frontier marches with Chinese Turkestan and its eastern frontier with Tibet, into which one of the chief trade routes from India

is that which passes through Ladakh. Its history furnishes an excellent illustration of the ruinous vicissitudes through which so many native states passed until the final establishment of *Pax Britannica* in India. It was once a centre of Buddhism, which prevailed up to the fifth century of our era. Under Hindu rulers of Rajput origin, from whom the present Maharajah claims descent, it was subjected to constant invasions by Tartar and Mongol hordes. Mahmud of Ghazni in the eleventh, and Shams-ud-Din in the fourteenth, century imported into it the conquering standards of Islam, and in 1586 it was finally incorporated by Akbar with the Mogul Empire of Delhi. In 1752 it was wrested from his degenerate descendants by Ahmed Shah Abdali, of Afghanistan, and for sixty-nine years was held by Afghan rulers more or less independent of Kabul, until it was in turn wrested from them by Ranjit Singh and his Sikhs. It then remained subject to the lieutenants of the Sikh Government at Lahore until after the battle of Sobraon, when Gulab Singh, having negotiated the terms of the Sikh surrender, obtained from the Indian Government his own recognition as Maharajah of Kashmir and Jammu. He lived just long enough to give substantial proofs of his loyalty upon the outbreak of the Mutiny in 1857, and both his son and his grandson, the present occupant of the Gaddi, have followed worthily in his footsteps. To-day Kashmir is not only one of the natural bulwarks of our Indian Empire, but it contributes a very important contingent to the Imperial Service Troops placed at the disposal of the Government of India by the native chiefs of India. The Kashmir contingent consists of four regiments of infantry and two mountain batteries—the latter a unique distinction, as no other

native contingent is armed as artillery. During the Hunza-Nagar Expedition in 1891-2, in the siege and relief of Chitral in 1895, and again during the Tirah Campaign in 1897, the Kashmir contingent, which is largely recruited from Rajput Dogras, who form the ruling caste, did excellent service, and the heroism displayed by a party of the 4th Kashmir Rifles under one of their own officers in bringing Captain Baird into the fort at Chitral after he had received his death-wound is one of the finest episodes of our recent frontier wars.

Separated from Kashmir by the districts ceded to the Indian Government in 1816, Nepal continues the belt of native territory for another 500 miles along the slopes of the Himalayas. In some respects Nepal occupies a position entirely of its own amongst the various states which, without being subjected to British administration, have been brought under the direct influence of the Indian Government. The Maharajah Adhiraj of Nepal cannot be classed amongst the ruling chiefs who are commonly, though not perhaps with strict accuracy, spoken of as the feudatory princes of the Indian Empire. Like the Ameer of Afghanistan, he claims the position rather of an ally than of a vassal; but the presence of a British resident at Khatmandu connotes a connection of somewhat closer dependence than that in which the Ameer stands towards the Indian Government. At the same time the *status* of the British resident in Nepal differs materially from that of a British resident at other native courts. His actual right of residence is, for instance, restricted to the capital and its immediate vicinity, and he cannot travel in other parts of the State without special authorisation. For other Englishmen to obtain access

to Nepal is only less difficult than to enter Afghanistan. The paramount Power, moreover, has never attempted to exercise the control, or even the paternal right of criticism and remonstrance with regard to matters of internal administration, which it exercises more or less freely in other native states. The Nepalese form of government is peculiar, and the nearest analogy to it might perhaps be found in Japan before the great national transformation which ushered in the new era of Japanese progress. Just as the Mikado was then relegated to a position of dignified impotence, whilst the real power was vested exclusively in the Shogun, and the Shogunate itself had become hereditary in the Tokugawa family, so the Maharajah Adhiraj of Nepal has long ceased to be anything more than a dignified figure-head, whilst, as his Prime Minister, the leading representative of one of the great families of Nepal has enjoyed the complete monopoly of power, coupling with his official rank the exalted title of Maharajah.

In the hands of a strong and able man like the late Sir Jang Bahadur, who remained the virtual ruler of Nepal for upwards of thirty years, from 1846 until his death in 1877, this peculiar system worked on the whole satisfactorily; but since his death dissensions have been rife in the Sham Sher family, and there have been sudden changes of Prime Minister accompanied by murder and bloodshed, which in other countries would be, perhaps deservedly, called revolutions. Last winter the Prime Minister of Nepal, whilst stopping at Benares on his way back from the Durbar, was the object of a mysterious assault, which is believed to have been instigated by a rival faction at Khatmandu who had no wish to see him return to his country.

But the standards which apply in more civilised com-

munities are not applicable to such states as Nepal. Even Sir Jang Bahadur, it must be remembered, only came into power after a massacre, in which thirty-one of the most influential men in Nepal disappeared; and the personal risks to which the holders of the highest office in the State are exposed do not appear to affect the authority enjoyed by its incumbents. Possibly, as was the case in Japan, the prestige of the dynasty, however completely it may seem to us to have been overshadowed by that of its masterful Ministers, still remains firmly enthroned in the imagination of the people. For the Maharajah Adhiraj of Nepal claims kinship with the noblest of Rajput chiefs. As a reigning dynasty the House of Nepal dates only from the first half of the eighteenth century, but its founder is said to be descended from the Sesodia Rajputs, who once held their court at Chitor, and still rule over Udaipur. Tradition has it that after the famous sack of Chitor by Ala-ud-Din, of Delhi, in 1305, one of the scions of the Solar House, which alone refused ever to bend the knee before the Mussulman conquerors, fled with some of his clansmen into the mountainous wilds of the Himalayas, where his descendants ultimately carved out for themselves a new kingdom. No doubt the Gurkhas intermarried largely with the Buddhist and Chinese or Tibetan races whom they gradually subdued and converted to Hinduism, but if the Rajput blood in their veins has been much diluted with baser strains, the virile qualities they to-day possess are worthy of the lineage they claim. Our main concern with Nepal is, in fact, at present as a recruiting ground for our native army, and it is certainly noteworthy that a State with which our political relations are so circumscribed contributes one

of the chief elements of strength to the armed forces of our Indian Empire. The little Gurkha, so like the Japanese, not only physically, but in many of his inbred qualities—except cleanliness, which has to be drilled into him—has long since established his reputation as a fighting man, and the fact that at the present moment the Indian Army List shows sixteen battalions composed wholly of Gurkhas speaks sufficiently to the confidence reposed in their unswerving loyalty. Bold, frank, and self-reliant, full of *élan* and equally full of dogged tenacity, exceptionally keen of sight and hearing, their good-natured temperament and cheerful powers of endurance have rendered them more popular with the British Tommy than perhaps any other of our native troops, and conversely they take perhaps more heartily than any others to soldiering under the British flag. At any rate, the recruiting officers stationed along the Nepal border, under agreement with the Nepalese authorities, have never yet had much difficulty in securing as many recruits as they want, and every season the young Gurkhas flock across the border to take the King's shilling with unfeigned alacrity.

Though the dynasty and the ruling race in Nepal claim to be of Hindu caste and creed, many of the aboriginal tribes still adhere to Buddhism, and the Nepalese Government has a Resident at Lhasa accredited to the Dalai Lama. Nepalese merchants and pilgrims keep up a constant intercourse between Nepal and Tibet, and there is a quarter specially assigned to them for residence at Lhasa. Nevertheless, there appears to have been little love lost in the past between Nepalese and Tibetans, and the Nepal Government generally has a long list of unredressed grievances against Tibet. Even the great barrier of the Himalayas,

formidable as it is, has proved in former times no insuperable obstacle to invading armies. Twice in the eighteenth century a Gurkha army invaded Tibet from Nepal, and in their turn, during the last decade of the same century, Tibetans and Chinese descended across the passes of Nepal and advanced almost to the gates of Khatmandu, where they compelled the Nepalese to sign a treaty of submission.

In the two small states of Sikkim and Bhutan, which follow on to Nepal on the southern slopes of the Himalayas, Buddhism has remained a still more important factor, for in both states not only the bulk of the population is Buddhist and Mongolian, but the ruling chief is himself a Buddhist and of Tibetan descent. The Valley of Chumbi, which forms a wedge-like projection of Tibetan territory between Sikkim and Bhutan, affords the most accessible route from Tibet into India.

Though it was the Indian Government that drove the Gurkhas of Nepal out of a large part of the territory now known as Sikkim and restored it, or granted it anew, to its hereditary chief in 1816, after Ochterlony's campaign against the Nepalese, hardly any native state has given so much trouble in proportion to its size and intrinsic importance as Sikkim, which has now only an area of about 2,800 square miles, with an estimated population of barely 30,000 souls scattered amongst deep Himalayan valleys or dotted about lofty plateaus. The reigning family owes its rise to the protection of Tibetan Lamas, and the Rajah of Sikkim has always been under their influence. In 1835, after a long course of gratuitously vexatious and offensive proceedings, the Rajah was brought to book and deprived of a portion of the grant of territory made to him in 1816,

the Indian Government resuming possession of the plains and the outer hills, including Darjeeling, now the seat of Government of British Sikkim, the centre of one of the finest and most flourishing tea-growing districts in the world, and a valuable sanatorium situated, under the shadow of Kanchinjunga, in the grandest Alpine scenery that even the Himalayas can show. But even this chastisement only mended matters temporarily. For the Tibetans still had the ear of the Rajah, and our relations with Tibet have never yet been placed on a satisfactory footing. Things reached another climax in 1886–7. It had been arranged in 1884 between the Chinese and British Governments that an Anglo-Indian official should be allowed to enter Tibet from the Sikkim frontier and visit Lhasa on a commercial mission. Mr. Colman Macaulay was selected to take charge of that mission, and was engaged in making preparations at Darjeeling when, owing to the British occupation of Upper Burmah, other questions came up for settlement between Great Britain and China in connection with the frontiers of our new province, which marched with those of Chinese Yun-nan. The Peking Government had acquiesced very reluctantly in the Macaulay Mission to Tibet, and it was finally dropped as a graceful concession to China in order to secure her recognition of the new régime in Burmah, where she claimed certain shadowy rights of suzerainty. The abandonment of the Macaulay Mission was, however, construed by the Tibetans and their friends in Sikkim as an unmistakable sign of weakness. In collusion with the Rajah, who not only refused to carry out his engagements under the Treaty of 1861, but actually took up his residence outside the borders of his own state on Tibetan territory, a Tibetan force

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invaded Sikkim in 1887 and proceeded to erect a fort at Singtao, well within Sikkim territory and almost within sight of Darjeeling. After we had duly wasted some months in futile remonstrance they were, it is true, ejected by a small expedition under General Graham in March of the following year, and the Peking Government ultimately sent down the *Amban*, the representative of the Suzerain Court at Lhasa, to sign a convention at Calcutta with the then Viceroy, the Marquis of Lansdowne, by which China recognised the British Protectorate of Sikkim, and agreed both to a delimitation of the frontier and to the appointment of a commission to facilitate trade. A British political officer was appointed to reside henceforth in Sikkim, and a British garrison was maintained in the frontier fort of Guathong. The expediency of fulfilling his obligations towards the paramount Power which had in former times saved his state from the Nepalese was thus definitely brought home to the ruler of Sikkim, who has been much less prone since then to coquetting with the Tibetan Lamas.

Bhutan has a larger population and more considerable area than Sikkim. It covers nearly 17,000 square miles, and its population is estimated at 200,000. Like Sikkim, it is a country of lofty snow-clad mountains and highland plateaus, intersected by deep valleys, but very little is known of either its geography or its ethnography. We have never been drawn politically into such close contact with it as with Sikkim, though from time to time, as in 1873 when Captain Godwin Austen accompanied Sir Ashley Eden to Punakha and made a survey of the route, missions are sent from India to the Court of the Deb Rajah, the temporal ruler of Bhutan, who appears to share the sovereign

authority with a spiritual ruler known as the Dharm Rajah. The Deb Rajah is, like the Rajah of Sikkim, a Buddhist and of Tibetan descent, and most of his people are of Mongolian origin and follow the Lamaistic form of Buddhism.

In these four states—Kashmir, Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan—are focussed all the interests which directly connect British India with the Central Asian regions lying beyond the Himalayas. I shall have occasion to return to these further on in dealing with the question of Tibet, but I cannot conclude this rapid survey of the north-east frontier of India without a few lines in reference to its boundaries in the extreme East. Beyond Bhutan, travelling eastward, the British province of Assam stretches up the valley of the Brahmaputra to the confines of Tibet, and to the east of Assam Upper Burmah is now contiguous with the Chinese Empire itself. Where the Burmese frontier marches with the Chinese province of Yun-nan it abuts on a wilderness of mountains so inhospitable as to form, in the opinion of the Indian Government, an insurmountable obstacle to the establishment of railway communication with the valley of the Yang-tsze, or at any rate an obstacle which it would prove far too costly to attempt to overcome at present. Still there is no reason why British commercial enterprise should not find a useful field in Yun-nan, where, as in Sze-chuan, the Chinese province lying to the north of it in the upper valley of the Yang-Tze river, equality of treatment in respect of all privileges and concessions that may be granted to the French was specifically secured to the British under the Anglo-French Agreement of 1896. Yun-nan has of late years had a bad name in England. But a very exhaustive report just published by the Burmah Government from

Mr. G. Litton, the British Consul at Momein or Peng-yuek, the new "Treaty Port," nine stages distant from Bhamo on the Burmah-Chinese frontier, tells a different tale. Yun-nan, he says, has at last recovered from the ravages of the long Muhammedan revolt, which was brought to a close by the death of the Panthay Sultan in 1870, and though he admits that great caution must be exercised with regard to mining enterprise, he considers the agricultural resources of the province to have been generally much underrated, and as the peasantry are now prospering, he believes Yun-nan may yet develop into an important trade mart, where Burmah should find between 3,000,000 and 4,000,000 of customers. Trade will, however, he remarks significantly, have to pay for the long delay in opening up this new route. It was not till March, 1902, or thirteen years after the French had secured the opening of Meng-tsze, the town in South Yun-nan which bears the same commercial relation to Tonking and the Red river as Momein in West Yun-nan bears to Burmah and the Irrawaddy, that we obtained the opening of the latter as a "Treaty Port."

Still further east again where the Shan States, that were declared to be part of British India in 1886, or have since then been placed under British protection, project across the Salween to the banks of the Mekong, we have the French as our immediate neighbours. We had in a weak moment agreed to cede to China under a Convention signed at Peking on March 1st, 1894, "all the suzerain rights in and over the States of Munglem and Kiang Hung formerly possessed by the Kings of Ava concurrently with the Emperors of China," on condition, however, that China should never cede any portion of those territories to any other nation

without our consent. In 1895, as the part reward of their share in the joint intervention of France, Germany, and Russia, which restored the Liaotong Peninsula to China after the Japanese war, the French obtained from the Chinese Government the cession of those territories in flagrant breach of its engagements towards us. Two years later, after protracted negotiations, we acquiesced in return for other concessions, and now the Mekong river forms the boundary for about 150 miles between the British Indian Empire and French Indo-China. To the south of the Shan States again, British Burmah, which is rapidly growing to be one of the most prosperous and wealthy provinces of our Indian Empire, is to a great extent covered by Siam, whose independence and territorial integrity, as far as the central valley of the Menam is concerned, have been, it may be hoped permanently, secured by common consent of the British and French Governments.

But we must nevertheless bear in mind that France is working steadily up from her base on the Pacific towards the interior of the Continent, and that her possessions are already at one point divided only from ours by the width of the Mekong. She has pushed her railways up from Tonking to the Chinese frontier of Yun-nan, and under a guarantee of the French Government, a large loan has been raised for the purpose of carrying them up to the capital of that province. She is rapidly pegging out extensive claims in Sze-chuan—perhaps naturally the richest, as well as the most populous, province of the Chinese Empire. In no very remote future, if nothing occurs to impair her energies in that direction or to check the advance of Russia southwards from her Siberian base, we may see France join hands with her northern ally on the eastern

borders of Tibet, at the head of the Yang-Tsze Valley which we were taught not so long ago to regard as the sphere specially reserved to British influence in China under the famous "Yang-Tsze Agreement," concluded in 1898 between Sir Claude MacDonald and the Tsung-li Yamên at Peking. Seven years ago, when writing on the Far Eastern question, I ventured to point out that we should witness before long a French advance from the south designed to meet a Russian advance from the north, and since then the progress made in both directions has been even more marked than could at that time be reasonably anticipated. Given the universal momentum which is impelling every civilised power towards colonial expansion, such developments are probably inevitable, and it may not lie within our power to avert them. If so, it is all the more necessary that we should reckon with them, and shape our own policy so that they shall at least not take us by surprise.

CHAPTER XXX

THE QUESTION OF TIBET

THE interests which directly connect British India with the Central Asian regions lying beyond the Himalayas on her north-eastern frontier may not be of primary importance compared with the interests we possess in the regions lying beyond the north-western frontier, but they are of sufficient importance to forbid our regarding the future of Tibet, or even of Chinese Turkestan, with indifference. Since Japan pricked the great Chinese bubble in 1894 the prestige of Peking has unquestionably waned in Tibet and in Chinese Turkestan, as well as in other parts of the Chinese Empire, and though Lhasa has hitherto shown no signs of abandoning, as far as we are concerned, the policy of self-isolation which it originally adopted in deference to the wishes of the suzerain power at Peking, there is little likelihood of a renewal of the aggressive tactics to which the Tibetans used from time to time to resort unless they receive encouragement from other quarters. On the other hand, if the influence of China has waned, that of Russia has increased. That Russia was bent upon establishing her ascendency in the Central Asian dependencies of the Chinese Empire became patent in 1901, when in the original draft of the first Manchurian Agreement, negotiated at Peking with Li Hung Chang

whilst the conference of ministers was discussing the terms of the peace protocol after the Boxer troubles, Russia attempted to introduce a clause securing to herself special privileges in Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan. That clause, it will be remembered, was dropped at the time, and the Court, under pressure from the Yang-Tsze viceroys as well as from Japan and England, ultimately declined to ratify the Convention in any form as then drafted. But what Russia was unable for the moment to do diplomatically she has since done practically by steady local pressure.

Chinese Turkestan lies entirely at her mercy. When Russia, in return for an indemnity of £1,500,000, agreed in 1881 to evacuate Kuldja, which she had only occupied during the usurpation of Yakub Beg in Kashgar, she was careful to draw the provisions of the treaty, signed by Marquis Tseng at St. Petersburg, so as to secure for her frontier officers a practically free hand with regard to delimitation. Geography is an occult science to the Chinese, and when, in the fulness of time, Hung-kün, who had become Tseng's successor at St. Petersburg, was presented by the Russian Government with an elaborate map on a large scale in which the Russo-Chinese frontier was marked out in accordance with the recommendations of the Russian military experts on the spot, the Chinese diplomatist, in order to "save his face," had no option but to accept a document he was incapable of discussing. Hung-kün returned, by the way, in due course to Peking as a member of the Tsung-li Yamên, and when Count Cassini arrived there in 1891 as Russian Minister, he initiated his memorable tenure of that post by congratulating the Tsung-li Yamên, in the presence of the presumably blushing Hung-Kün, on possessing as one of its

members a statesman whose knowledge of intricate geographical questions had elicited universal respect and admiration in Russia! During the Pamir negotiations between Great Britain and Russia, British diplomacy tried without much success to galvanise the Chinese into taking some interest in the question. Even the proceedings of the Anglo-Russian Boundary Commission on the Pamirs, though its work along a certain portion of the line directly touched upon Chinese territory, failed to stir their apathy. Perhaps from their own point of view they were right. No frontier, however admirable on paper, is of much use, unless to the natural, but seldom insurmountable, obstacles it may present, are superadded the determination and the power to make it inviolable. Even across the Sarikol range there is, according to Sir T. Holdich, an open way by the Beyik Pass into the Tagdumbash and thence down into the Yarkand plateau, and to the north of the Beyik there are other passes much easier and more direct. It is needless to say China herself does nothing to guard them. In fact, the Russian outposts are being constantly shifted at the pleasure of the Russian authorities on the spot, whose action Peking ratifies on demand. The Russians are pushing on their railway eastward from Samarkand to Andijan, and not only do their military posts entirely dominate the Chinese frontier, but they have actually established one, called Pamirski Post, well inside Chinese territory on the Murghab between Kashgar and Chitral. The Chinese Governor in these circumstances is naturally nothing more than the humble servant of the Russian Consul-General, who, with his Cossack guards, can at any moment make Russian ascendency supreme, in name as it already is in fact, from Yarkand to Kuldja. Further north, in

Mongolia, Chinese authority is being steadily displaced by that of Russia, who is gradually getting as sure, if not as open, a grip of all these outlying dependencies of the Chinese Empire as she has already got of Manchuria.

Nor is that all. There are indications of no slight significance that she is already drawing Tibet within her sphere of influence. Russian diplomacy has been fully alive to the opportunities it possesses of opening up relations with Lhasa through the Buddhist tribes, who live on, or in immediate proximity to, Russian territory, and are, therefore, more easily amenable to Russian influence. It has unquestionably found a most valuable ally in the Taranath-Lama, or Bogdo, of Urga. Some interesting information with regard to this potentate was given this summer in a lecture delivered before the Royal Geographical Society by Mr. C. W. Campbell, Chinese Secretary of the British Legation at Peking and a distinguished scholar, who had undertaken on his way home on leave an important journey of exploration through some of the least known regions of North-Eastern Mongolia. The Bogdo, he tells us, is the pontiff of the Lamaistic Church in North Mongolia, is popularly venerated as the third in importance of the great avatars, or "living gods," coming after the Dalai Lama of Lhasa and the Pantshen Lama of Tashilunpo, and occupies a political position in the Mongol world analogous to that of the popes of mediæval Christendom. The ecclesiastical title is *Cheptsun Damba Khutukhtu*, which was originally conferred by the Dalai Lama of Tibet in A.D. 1653 on a son of the Tushetu Khan. This prince, the first Bogdo, was the St. Paul of Mongol Lamaism, and is known in Mongol history as Undur Gegen.

Under his advice the Khalha tribes gravitated to China, rather than to Russia, in 1688, when the attacks of the Kalmucks under Galdan threatened their existence. He is the "Grand Lama Houtouktou" who figures so largely in Gerbillon's description of the assembly of the Khalha princes held by the Chinese Emperor Kanghsi at Dolon-nor in 1691. Ever since his death in 1723, the Urga pontiffs have come from Tibet, and the present Bogdo, the eighth "incarnation" living in Mongolia, is the son of a steward in the Court of the Dalai Lama of Lhassa. He was born in 1870, and was invested and brought to Urga when a child of four. Mr. Campbell does not seem to think that the Bogdo's education had fitted him to fill the position of a living deity with dignity or wisdom, and since he passed from tutelage the demands of his Court on the purses of the Khalhas have become a burdensome tax. "I was a trifle surprised," Mr. Campbell adds, "to learn that he was married, and openly appeared at festivals with his wife and child. Devout Mongols who are asked to explain this mode of life, singular in the head of a celibate church, assert that it is a subjective hallucination only apparent to the unfaithful. But there is a large proportion of 'unfaithful' Mongols, and amongst them it is a common opinion that the present Bogdo will be the last of his line."

In the meantime, however, he is still a factor of considerable political importance in Mongolia, and the Russians, who are supreme at Urga, naturally hold him in the hollow of their hand. But their efforts to extend their influence over the Buddhist church even in Mongolia would hardly have been so successful had they failed to gain at the same time the goodwill of the fount and source of spiritual authority at Lhasa.

Their chief intermediary for this purpose has been a Siberian Buriat, by name Dorjieff, who reached Lhasa with recommendations from the Bogdo, and soon obtained access as a zealous Buddhist to the councils of the Dalai Lama himself. After a few years' residence in the Sacred City he went to Russia on a confidential mission in 1899, returning early in the following year to Lhasa. The object of his mission may be inferred from the fact that at the end of 1900 he was again in Russia, this time with a full-blown Tibetan mission, of which the head was officially described in Russia as "the Senior Tsanite Khomba attached to the Dalai Lama of Tibet." This mission arrived at Odessa in October, 1900, and was received in solemn audience by the Tsar at Livadia. In June, 1901, the indefatigable Dorjieff, who had been back in the meantime to report progress at Lhasa, appeared once more with a Tibetan mission, and proceeded on this occasion to St. Petersburg, where, as the bearers of an autograph letter from the Dalai Lama, the envoys were welcomed by the Tsar at Peterhoff. They were escorted home through Central Asia by a Russian force to which a number of intelligence officers were attached. Since then several Russian missions, which are, no doubt, officially described as scientific, in spite of the Cossack guards which invariably accompany them, have been allowed to travel, not merely in the outlying provinces of Tibet, with unwonted freedom. Gold is undoubtedly one of the attractions which Tibet presents to Russian enterprise. Prijevalsky is known to have once told the present Tsar that Tibet would be a second California, and this is what many Russians firmly believe. They have been prospecting for gold for several years, and they have at the present moment an expedition in Eastern

Tibet engaged mainly in such work. Little, as a rule, is said about these expeditions in public in Russia, but Professor Zybikoff, also a Buriat by birth, who has a chair at the St. Petersburg University, has recently been allowed to give an account of a journey in Tibet from which he had just returned. In the course of his travels he reached Lhasa, and appears to have resided there for some time unmolested under the guise of a Lama. According to him there are half a million Buriats, Mongols, and Kalmuks in the Asiatic dominions of Russia, who, as Lamaistic Buddhists, receive their priests from Tibet and send some of their youths to be trained at Lhasa, thus keeping up steady intercourse with the seat of Buddhism. Russia has not neglected such admirable opportunities for promoting her political purposes at Lhasa, and the gates of the Sacred City have remained by no means hermetically closed against her patient policy of peaceful penetration.

That, in the event of Russia acquiring absolute control of the Central Asian dependencies of China, the trade which is now carried on with them from India would disappear seems inevitable. Already, according to the trade report for the year ending March 31st, 1902, drawn up by the British Political Officer at Kashgar, Russian competition in Chinese Turkestan is pressing heavily upon the cotton trade. "English goods," Mr. Macartney says, "are now restricted to manufactured cottons in the form of muslins, handkerchiefs," and certain Indian specialities. "In chintz, the demand for which is practically unlimited because it is used by the natives in everyday clothing, we have had to cede the place to Russia, whose factories have obtained the monopoly of supplying Turkestan with

that class of goods." Perhaps the most noteworthy feature in Mr. Macartney's report is the statement that the balance of trade, which is all in favour of India, is made up by the exportation of treasure from Chinese Turkestan to the value of three and a half lakhs, almost the whole amount of which goes to India in the shape of Russian gold coins and currency notes. The other chief export from Central Asia is a drug called *Charas*, a resin which naturally exudes from the flowers and leaves of the hemp plant. It is an intoxicating stimulant used for smoking, and though considered less harmful than *ganga*, according to the reports of the Indian Hemp Drugs Commission, an import tax of 100 per cent. was placed upon it three years ago in the Punjab in order to check the consumption by the native. Nevertheless, the value of *Charas* brought into India through Ladakh in 1901–2 amounted to over four lakhs out of a total import trade of 12,80,668 rupees. The exports from India by the same route amounted to 11,74,462 rupees. Between Bengal and Tibet the direct trade of 1902 amounted to about eight lakhs for imports and seven and a quarter lakhs for exports, and probably some portion of the considerable trade between Bengal and Nepal, amounting to 260 lakhs for imports and exports, represents indirect trade with Tibet. However that may be, the total volume of trade across the Himalayas is small, and though it is capable of great development, especially if rich goldfields are ever opened up in Tibet, it is not from the commercial point of view that we need chiefly to concern ourselves about events on the other side of the watershed.

What it would be impossible to view without some concern would be the ascendency of a foreign and possibly hostile power at Lhasa, controlling the policy

of a great politico-religious organisation whose influence can and does make itself appreciably felt all along the north-eastern borderland of India. Lhasa is the stronghold of Lamaistic Buddhism, a debased form of Buddhism largely overgrown with tantric philosophy. Of the five great Avatari Lamas, in whose successive reincarnations its spiritual authority is vested, the Dalai Lama, who resides at Lhasa, is the chief. Two others live in Tibet. There is one in Bhutan, and I have already referred to the Taranath Lama of Urga in Mongolia. But they all derive their sanction from Lhasa. Lhasa is, in fact, the Rome of Central Asian Buddhism, and the many-storied Po-ta-la on the hill to the west of the city is its Vatican, whence its influence radiates through innumerable lamaseries or Buddhist monasteries, not only into Turkestan and Mongolia and Western China, but across the Himalayas into the frontier states of our Indian Empire. Corrupt and degraded as it is, it is still unquestionably a power, and just because it is corrupt and degraded it might lend itself the more readily to become for a consideration the tool of Russian ambitions. Rigidly orthodox at home, Russia displays abroad singular flexibility in adapting her yoke to the religious peculiarities of Asiatic peoples, and the spiritual authority of the Lhasa theocracy in alliance with the Great White Tsar would enjoy under Russian tutelage an amount of material support which it has ceased to derive from its allegiance to Peking. Tibet as a Russian dependency would, at any rate, no longer be a *quantité négligeable*, and our north-east frontier, naturally formidable as it is, would require to be watched, just as every civilised country has to watch its frontiers, whatever they may be, where they march

with a powerful neighbour, and most of all in India, where our frontier is fringed with semi-independent native states, over which our authority is conditioned mainly upon the hitherto unrivalled prestige of our Imperial power in Asia. No doubt, even if Tibet were to pass to-morrow into the hands of Russia, many years would elapse before she could actually threaten our north-east frontier, and, considering the enormous physical difficulties, it is not presumably from that direction that she would ever attempt to strike at us in real earnest. But there are other ways in which her presence would soon make itself felt. Could we, for instance, draw away from Nepal the splendid fighting material for which we annually indent upon it if a great military power controlled the approaches to the passes through which a Tibeto-Chinese army once descended upon Khatmandu? Could Tibetan intrigues in Sikkim or Tibetan raids down the Chumbi valley be dismissed as mere local incidents or disposed of as summarily as we have hitherto done if Tibet owned allegiance to Russia instead of China?

Our own relations with Tibet have unfortunately been governed in the past mainly by that fond belief in the "latent power" of China which, until the Japanese war, was one of the fundamental dogmas of British statesmanship in Central Asia. In the light of more recent events it seems almost incredible that for upwards of twenty years our Central Asian policy was, to a great extent, built up on the delusion that Chinese influence might be properly regarded as an effectual counterpoise to that of Russia. After the murder of Mr. Margary in Yun-nan in 1875, one of the conditions tardily exacted from the Chinese Government, in reparation of such an outrage committed upon a British

official with the connivance of the provincial authorities under whose protection he was travelling in the discharge of his duties, was that facilities should be given for a British mission to enter Tibet and visit Lhasa. But years were allowed to pass without any effect being given to this supplementary article of the agreement concluded by Sir Thomas Wade with Li Hung-chang at Chefoo on September 13th, 1876. In 1884, however, the Indian Government returned to the charge, and the assent of Peking was obtained to its request that Mr. Macaulay should receive all necessary facilities for proceeding to Lhasa with a commercial mission from India. Mr. Macaulay himself visited the Chinese capital, and obtained from the Tsung-li-Yamên, together with his official passports and letters of recommendation to the Chinese *Amban* at Lhasa, all those assurances of support and goodwill of which Chinese officials are always prodigal. But whilst the Chinese Government was lavish of promises during his stay in Peking, Mr. Macaulay had no sooner turned his back on the Celestial capital than Chinese diplomacy was at work in Tibet to defeat the objects, and if possible prevent the departure of his mission. The Tibetans responded with alacrity, and the Chinese were soon in a position to intimate to the British Government that the news of Mr. Macaulay's impending mission had created much popular excitement and apprehension in Tibet, and that there was every reason to fear it would meet with an unfriendly, possibly even with a hostile reception. As in the meantime the Burmah campaign had taken place, and in view of the annexation of Upper Burmah it was deemed necessary to propitiate the Son of Heaven, who claimed certain shadowy rights of suzerainty over the kingdom of Ava, we were at

last induced to countermand the Macaulay Mission as a graceful concession to Peking, and its abandonment, "inasmuch as inquiry into the circumstances by the Chinese Government has shown the existence of many obstacles," was formally placed on record in the Anglo-Chinese Convention of July 24th, 1886, by which Great Britain furthermore undertook to sanction the continuance of "the customary decennial missions" to Peking from Burmah in return for an acknowledgment by China that "England shall be free to do whatever she thinks fit and proper" in Burmah itself. I have already recorded the immediate results of that graceful concession on the Tibetan border, the incursion of Tibetan forces into Sikkim, and the Calcutta Convention by which, after their ejection, China had to recognise the British protectorate of Sikkim. Though the Chinese *Amban* at Lhasa came down in person to sign that agreement with the Viceroy—an act of supreme, if reluctant, condescension of which even the Tibetans might have been supposed to understand the significance—Tibetan obstruction was only temporarily checked. The detailed regulations for frontier trade and grazing rights on the border were, it is true, drawn up and agreed to in 1893 between the British and Chinese Commissioners in accordance with Article VII. of the Calcutta Convention, but the Tibetans have generally treated them as waste paper. Another and, it is to be hoped, a more serious attempt is now being made to deal with the Tibetans and put an end to the lawlessness in which they have hitherto indulged with far too much impunity. Colonel Younghusband, one of the most experienced political officers of the Indian Government, whose explorations in Central Asia, including Tibet, have given him an almost unrivalled knowledge of the

country and the people, has been appointed, together with Mr. White, the Political Officer in Sikkim, to meet Chinese and Tibetan representatives at Khamba-Jong, on the Tibetan side of the frontier, and discuss with them the various questions in dispute. The British Commissioners, who were accompanied by an escort of 200 men of a native infantry regiment, with a reserve of 300 men, across the Sikkim border at Tangu, arrived at Khamba-Jong last July, and though no official information has been given with regard to the progress of negotiations, it may be assumed that the Indian Government will not withdraw its commissioners until our relations with Tibet have been placed altogether on a very different footing from the past.

If any faith can be put in the assurances given by Russia that, in spite of circumstantial reports which have found credence, if they have not actually originated, in Russian circles, she has concluded no convention with Tibet or in regard to Tibet with China, the obstructive attitude in which the Tibetans appear to have so far persisted is hardly likely to be maintained. For there can be no doubt from the language which both Chinese and Tibetan officials have openly used of late years that they have hitherto believed they could count upon Russian support. Otherwise they would hardly have overlooked the fact that the long-suffering patience we have so far displayed cannot be put down to our inability to bring material pressure to bear upon them. The mountain barriers which nature has interposed between British India and Tibet are all on our side of the frontier. The actual passes into Tibet are extremely easy, and as soon as they are crossed the country lies perfectly open right away to Lhasa. After the Tibetan raid into Sikkim the British punitive

expedition in 1888 occupied the Chumbi valley, which is only half Tibetan and projects like a wedge into British territory between Sikkim and Bhutan. We should have been thoroughly justified in retaining possession of it at that time, as many Indian authorities strongly recommended, and we evacuated it solely out of exaggerated deference to Chinese susceptibilities. These, at any rate, we should hardly take into consideration on the present occasion, for the Chinese have shown themselves absolutely incapable of holding the Tibetans to the engagements contracted on their behalf, and though we have no wish to "spoil the face" of the Peking Government, it is with the Tibetans we have to deal, and it is of the utmost importance we should not again throw away the opportunity of showing them that, whilst we wish for nothing better than friendly relations with them, we mean to hold them to the letter and the spirit of the engagements upon which our relations with them are based.

CHAPTER XXXI

OUR POSITION IN INDIA

BEFORE attempting to draw any general conclusions from this survey of the hostile or rival influences which, to borrow Lord Curzon's metaphor, are creeping up to the very ramparts of our Indian Empire, it may be well—nay, it is indispensable—to cast a glance at the condition of India itself.

Never before in the world's history has any nation made itself responsible for the safety and welfare of so large a proportion of the human race, alien in race, in religion, and in language, as we have in respect of the 300,000,000 people who have been brought under the British *raj* in India. Nor has any nation ever entertained so generous a conception of its duties towards the populations over whom it rules by right of conquest. We may not always have acted up to this conception, for nations, like individuals, are but human, and, as such, are apt from time to time to lapse from the high standard they have, with the utmost sincerity of purpose, set before them. But it is not an idle boast that the British people, on the whole, do regard themselves in relation to India less as the masters of a subjugated dependency than as the trustees for the moral and material interests of their Indian fellow-subjects. There may be differences of

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opinion amongst us as to the efficiency with which we discharge our national obligations towards India. Some have, no doubt, honestly convinced themselves that British rule has tended to substitute new and more serious, if less glaring, evils for those which were indissolubly connected with the ancient systems of native government we displaced. Some wax impatient at our failure to train the people of India within three or four generations to those methods of self-government which are with ourselves the outcome of centuries of laborious discipline. On the other hand, there may be in some quarters an excess of optimism, an ingrained tendency, especially in the official mind, to look away from the dark spots in a social system which is certainly not free from many serious blemishes, to ignore inevitable failures and to dwell exclusively upon the brighter side of the picture. But few, if any, will be found amongst the bitterest critics—native or European—of British administration in India to contend that, in the interests of the Indian people, there is any practical alternative to the maintenance of British rule, or amongst the warmest apologists of our system of government to pretend that there is no room for improvement in its methods.

It would be presumptuous on my part to venture to assess the relative merits and demerits of Anglo-Indian administration, or to dogmatise upon such a complicated question as that of the actual condition of the people of India under British rule. But there are a few indisputable facts which cannot fail to strike anyone who has, at various periods, actually visited different parts of India, or who even has merely studied India in books. One is the immense size and variety of India. We are apt to picture India to ourselves as one country

presenting much the same features of homogeneity that we associate with most countries, in Europe or elsewhere, united under one common name. India is in reality a continent rather than a country, and it embraces scarcely less numerous and distinct varieties of natural configuration and climate as well as of race, religion, and customs than our European continent itself does. From Bombay to Calcutta is nearly as far as from Paris to Constantinople, and from Peshawar to Cape Comorin is further than from St. Petersburg to Lisbon. There is more difference both of race and of temperament between the Pathan of the north-west frontier and the Tamil of the Madras Presidency, or between the Bengali Baboo and the Moplah of the Malabar coast, than there is between Norwegian and Magyar, or between Greek and Scotsman. No religious differences divide European races to-day—except, perhaps, Christians and Jews in Russia and Rumania—as they still divide in India Hindus and Mussulmans, or even, amongst Mussulmans themselves, Sunnis and Shias. Even in the matter of language Russian and Portuguese, or English and Hungarian, are not further apart than Telugu and Pashtu or Hindustani and Tamil. Apart from the unique barrier of caste, for which we should seek in vain for any parallel in Europe, the ordinary distinctions between rich and poor, between the toiling masses and the few who sit in the seats of the mighty, are no less clearly defined in India than in the most aristocratic or autocratic of European countries, though the lines of cleavage may be different. Yet be the shortcomings of British administration what they may, we have devised a system of government which serves as a common denominator for all these heterogeneous and fluctuating

and often conflicting quantities, and it has proved in good times and in bad times to be a working system which at least gives security of life and property to all. That is certainly in itself no mean achievement. The internal peace of India has remained undisturbed since the great convulsion of 1857. The poverty of the Indian people is unquestionably great, for India itself is, on the whole, a poor country, in some parts seriously overcrowded, and, in general, but scantily endowed with the ordinary resources of nature. Moreover, the native of India, patient and hard-working though he be, does not as a rule possess, and has not yet acquired, the trained intelligence necessary to make the most of those resources, such as they are. During the last few years, plague and famine have visited India with cruel intensity, and though similar visitations are of chronic occurrence in the annals of Indian history, the memory of even greater sufferings in the past does not mitigate the severity of such an ordeal in the present. The only consoling features are that never has greater energy been displayed in relieving public misery, and—though this is perhaps a consideration that may savour of national self-righteousness—that the machinery applied to that purpose has generally proved far more efficient in those parts of India which are under direct British administration than in those which are still subject to native administration under their own ruling chiefs. Nor does it seem possible to deny or to explain away the existence of a great reserve of economic vitality in a country where, in spite of such widespread calamities, the public revenue has continued, without any exceptional pressure, to expand uninterruptedly, and all the usual tests have continued to indicate an increase rather than a decrease in the

aggregate of material prosperity. Against the exaggerations of theoretical pessimism, as well as against the more tangible facts of appalling mortality and acute suffering within certain areas, the Indian Government is, at any rate, entitled to set off the equally tangible fact that after such a series of black years it has been able to give the whole of British India a considerable reduction of taxation with every prospect of permanency, and that the vast system of railways, irrigation canals, roads, and other public works with which it has gradually endowed the country, though still demanding large extensions and improvements, actually possesses a marketable value that covers to-day the whole indebtedness of the State.

Though the Western and the Eastern mind are never likely to meet on the same plane, some at least of the artificial barriers which are keeping them apart are gradually weakening, and the benefits of British rule receive recognition even from those who most loudly resent its methods. Such recognition, it must be admitted, is too often less articulate than the malevolent criticism which finds daily expression in the columns of many native newspapers. But the freedom which the Press enjoys, even if it degenerates at times into licence, may itself be taken as a proof of the confidence which the Indian Government entertains in the stability of existing institutions. Hostile criticism, moreover, proceeds in many cases from natives who have lost touch with their own people, and still find themselves excluded from full communion with the Western world into which they consider themselves intellectually qualified to enter. The social aspect of the race problem as between European and native is a very difficult and delicate one, especially in regard to the natives

whom education has divorced from their own traditions, customs, and beliefs. To the native who remains in all essentials untouched by Western thought it probably does not present such difficulties as his self-constituted champions sometimes assume. A French writer, who was at first shocked at the exclusiveness practised by Anglo-Indian society towards natives of all ranks and classes, remarks, shrewdly enough, as the result of subsequent observation, that in a country accustomed to such rigid lines of social demarcation as the caste system has drawn, the new European caste may well be regarded as merely one more course superimposed upon the older courses of which the Indian social fabric has been continuously built up, and that as a matter of fact the exclusiveness of the Anglo-Indian is by no means so one-sided as it appears; for if natives are never admitted on a footing of complete equality into European houses, the great majority amongst them would also never think of admitting Europeans into the intimacy of their own homes, whilst some would sooner starve than eat food over which the shadow of a European had cast defilement.

Nevertheless, in spite of limitations which are understood and respected by both sides, very real friendship does exist, and exists far more frequently than one is at first inclined to believe, between natives and Europeans. The cordiality of the personal relations which many British officials establish with the natives of high as well as low degree among whom their duties throw them at different periods of their careers, is a factor of which it is difficult for us at home to realise the full value. In the public services of India those relations are often inherited from generation to generation. For instance, one day at Delhi during the

necine warfare, when even the proud Rajputs appeared to be at the mercy of Mahratta adventurers, it was the strong hands of Englishmen like Clive, Hastings, and Wellesley that stayed the storm. Unlike other waves of conquest which poured over India from the north like desolating floods, levelling all things, the British conquest of India arrested the progress of internal disintegration which had already set in; and as soon as the initial work of pacification was accomplished and the direct control of Indian policy had been assumed in great measure by the British Government, it was to the task of preserving as far as possible the social and political fabric of the Indian dependency from further decay that the statesmanship of its greatest British rulers was directed. In the confidence which that policy, in spite of occasional and more or less unavoidable lapses, has on the whole engendered, lies the secret of the loyalty to which the princes and peoples of India gave emphatic expression at the Durbar, and of our ability to hold so many millions alien to our race, our religion, and our customs contentedly subject to our peaceful sway.

Still, though we may rightly claim on the whole to have brought peace rather than the sword to India, it is by the sword that we brought peace, and by the sword that we must yet look in the last resort to maintaining it. It was this aspect of the British *raj* which the procession of the Mutiny veterans round the Durbar amphitheatre symbolised with a force and pathos which it is almost hopeless to attempt to convey to those who have not been privileged to witness it. They were but a small band, composed in about equal proportions of Europeans, Eurasians, and natives, all well stricken in years, and some visibly bowed down under their

weight, grey-haired, white-bearded. A good many seemed to have regained for the nonce their youthful elasticity of step, but the oldest and most infirm could only limp and totter bravely on to the once familiar strains of a stirring military march. Most of the Europeans were in plain mufti, but some wore uniforms, for the greater part faded and tarnished from long disuse. Of the natives, the majority clearly belonged to the humbler classes, for their long, flowing garments were plain and unadorned. The rear of this battered column was brought up by a party of withered old Ghurkas, whose faltering steps were tenderly borne up by young sturdy fellows of their regiment. There were about six hundred altogether, a strange medley of races and types, time-worn and weather-beaten, with no show of pomp and circumstance to arrest the eye. But, more superbly than in shining raiment or in lustre of gold and silver, these men were clothed in the glory of as splendid memories as the records of our Empire can boast. They represented the remnants of those slender, isolated forces of stout-hearted Britons and loyal natives who, forty-six years ago, cut off for months from the outer world under the flaming sun of an Indian summer, in the stress of battle and the more deadly stress of pestilence, through physical hardships of every kind and worse hardships of the soul, held India for the Empire on the Ridge of Delhi, in the Residency at Lucknow, and on many another bloody field, when the sudden tempest of revolt, though it proved to be as local and shortlived as a tropical tornado, seemed to shake the whole fabric of British power to the very foundations.

As they entered the arena one common emotion, more overpowering, more universal, more spontaneous than

at any other moment, thrilled the whole of the vast assemblage. Princes and people, natives and Europeans, soldiers and civilians, men and women, all rose as by one impulse to salute that band of heroes, and many an eye was dimmed and there was a choke in many a throat as we gazed upon that pathetic remnant. There was one thought in every mind. But for them and such as them, humble fighters though they were, who, to borrow the terse and eloquent inscription on Henry Lawrence's grave at Lucknow, had just "tried to do their duty," where might be all the pageantry of that fleeting day, where all the promise of a splendid future which still lies before our Indian Empire? Amongst the abiding memories of that memorable fortnight, surely none will be deeper, none more stimulating, than that vision conjured up in such surroundings out of the tragic but glorious past.

One other incident I should like to recall from those days at Delhi which illustrates the peculiar ties of sentiment that bind the peoples of India to our rule—ties of which, with our cold Western habits of thought, we are apt to overlook or underrate the value. Of all the peoples of India none, perhaps, has accepted British rule with more unreserved loyalty than the Sikhs, for to them, probably, alone it represents the fulfilment of prophecy. Two hundred and twenty-eight years ago one of their greatest religious leaders, Teg Bahadur, ninth Guru, was put to death at Delhi by Aurungzeb for refusing to embrace Islam. According to Sikh tradition, Teg Bahadur had come to Delhi and surrendered himself into the Moghul Emperor's hands with full knowledge that he was about to lay down his life for his people. He had himself preached, "Be faithful even unto death to them that have put trust in

you," and he was ready to sacrifice his own life in the belief that the sacrifice was required in order to discharge the pledges of loyalty given in earlier times to the Moghul dynasty unto the seventh generation, and thus to hasten the release of the people from its yoke. But Aurungzeb hesitated to kill him, and sought rather to induce him by alternate promises and threats to embrace the faith of Mahomet. At last, all such endeavours proving useless, Teg Bahadur was brought up before the Moghul Emperor on the charge of having raised his eyes from the prison walls to the latticed windows of the Imperial zenana. The holy man knew that this meant death, but he answered fearlessly: "If I raised my eyes in the direction of thy zenana it was not to look upon its forbidden windows, but far beyond them into the West, whence I saw armies of a fair-haired race pouring forth from beyond the seas who shall tear down thy purdahs and overthrow thine empire." After the last Khalsa army was shattered on the field of Gujarat the Sikhs recognised in their defeat the supreme fulfilment of Teg Bahadur's prophecy, and from that time have not only submitted loyally to British rule, but in the trying times of the Mutiny and in every war waged since then have placed the martial qualities of their race unstintingly at its service.

At the suggestion of the venerable Rajah of Nabha, than whom no Punjab chieftain enjoys more universal respect, the Sikhs determined to mark their peculiar sense of the deep significance of the Durbar by a solemn act of worship at the shrine of the prophet-martyr who foretold in the hour of death the greatness of the British-Indian Empire. The birthday of Teg Bahadur's son, Govind Singh, last of the ten Gurus, under whose leadership the Sikh religion was reduced

into the final shape which it still preserves, occurred during the Delhi celebrations, and offered an excellent opportunity for this spontaneous demonstration of loyalty from the Sikh people. Early one morning the Sikh princes and people wended their way to the small shrine in the Chandni Chauk, which occupies the site of Teg Bahadur's prison and execution. The sacred Granth, the holy book of the Sikh religion, was carried in pomp into the sanctuary, followed by a brilliant cortège of Sikh chieftains, amongst whom old Nabha alone, with nothing to mark his noble station but the dignity of his features and his snow-white beard, trod barefooted as if in protest against the luxury and self-indulgence of younger generations. There, in their holy of holies, the great Sikh chiefs renewed in each other's presence their vows of fealty to the Sovereign of that Empire from the West whose power had been foretold to them of old.

If the proclamation of the Imperial title has invested the ties which unite the ruling chiefs to the British Crown with a personal or *quasi*-feudal character, which in many cases appeals very directly to their most cherished traditions, we have set before them in the territories subject to direct British administration an example which few of them have hitherto succeeded in emulating. For the good government of a population six or seven times more numerous than that of the British Islands depends, in the long run, at least as much upon the great Civil Service of India as upon the high administrators temporarily deputed to represent the Crown at Calcutta and in the chief Presidencies. For integrity, efficiency, and public spirit the Indian Civil Service stands absolutely unrivalled, and that splendid army of civilians scattered over the length

and breadth of the vast Indian continent can boast, perhaps, an even nobler, if less brilliant, record than our soldiers, for it is too often only a thankless record of hard but obscure battles fought year in, year out, against ancient traditions of corruption and oppression, against popular ignorance and Oriental apathy, against famine and pestilence, in whole-hearted devotion to the best interests of the alien millions committed to their charge. It is a record, too, in which the natives of India have their part, and no inconspicuous part, together with the ruling race, for we have gradually admitted into the judicial and other branches of the public service an increasing number of competent natives whose loyalty is as unquestionable as their ability. The problem of native education—elementary, secondary, and University—presents formidable difficulties, moral and material, which have so far been only very partially overcome. The present Viceroy has publicly admitted that "our educational systems in India are faulty in the extreme." But under his impulse the subject is receiving closer attention than has generally been paid to it, and such experiments as Aligurh are there to show that, in the higher branches, at any rate, the problem can be solved. Agricultural education, though it unfortunately seems to appeal but little to the native classes most receptive of Western instruction, is probably far more important than many other and more showy branches of education, for the poverty of the vast peasant population of India is certainly due in no small measure to their listlessness and ignorance and to their obstinate adherence to antiquated methods of cultivation. With regard to commerce and industry, considerable as the developments of the last half-century have been, India

stands to-day on the threshold of a fresh period of productive expansion, which, if it fulfils the expectations of even the most cautious observers, will open up the natural resources of the country on a scale of hitherto unprecedented magnitude.

At the same time the more deeply convinced one is that, in the language of Lord Curzon at the Coronation Durbar, "the India of the future will, under Providence, not be an India of diminishing plenty, of empty prospect, or of justifiable discontent, but one of expanding industry, of awakened faculties, of increasing prosperity, and of more widely distributed comfort and wealth"; the more one shares his faith in the conscience and purpose of the British people and in the almost illimitable capacities of India; the more firmly one must also hold with him that, under no other condition can that future be realised save under the unchallenged supremacy of the paramount Power, and under no other controlling authority can it be maintained save under that of the British Crown.

From this point of view the problem of political defence against the dangers which may threaten the peace and security of India from without is one which concerns not only our interests but our duty as a nation. Opinions differ as to the share of Imperial burdens which the people of India should be called upon to bear. But if it can be fairly argued that it is not at present excessive, it is also generally admitted that it cannot be indefinitely increased. As India rises under our ægis in the scale of civilisation, she will surely and rightly demand that a larger and not a smaller proportion of her revenues shall be applied to the development of the moral, intellectual, and material resources which make for peaceful progress. The

military expenditure indispensable to the maintenance of internal and external peace in a country such as India must always be heavy. It is already hard to measure the cost to India of the political changes which have taken place during the last fifty years beyond her frontiers in the heart of Asia. We shall have failed lamentably in our duty towards her if we neglect through want of due diligence and of timely energy to anticipate and, as far as lies with us, to avert further changes in the future which would impose upon her still heavier burdens.

CHAPTER XXXII

RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

REDUCED to its simplest expression, the Middle Eastern Question, of which I have sought to define a few of the most salient features, may be briefly formulated as follows:—How is the position we were able to acquire, and have hitherto held, in Asia by our control of the sea to be upheld under new conditions, in which land-power is tending to become a factor only less essential to its retention than sea-power? India is, and must remain, the key of that position. More than that; it has grown to be, if not the corner-stone of the British Empire, at least one of the chief bases of its security. Equi-distant, roughly, from Australia and from South Africa, India balances, to the north of the line, our two great colonies in the southern hemisphere. Neither the enterprise of British merchants, nor the valour of British soldiers, nor the statesmanship of British rulers, would have availed to build up the fabric of our Indian Empire had not the British Navy secured for them immunity from outside interference. With no neighbours beyond its land frontiers possessing anything like our material resources or our methods of organisation, India, in the state in which we found it, was bound to be absorbed by our superior civilisation as soon as we established our command of the seas,

over which alone any rival influence could reach it. From the moment when the competing sea-power of France had to yield to our own, our Indian dependency was for all practical purposes as securely isolated against foreign aggression as our own islands at home. For nearly a century afterwards there seemed to be little prospect that India would ever lose the advantages of that *quasi*-insular position.

When India passed under the direct administration of the Crown, after the great Mutiny of 1857, we were for all practical purposes the only European power in Asia. Of our rivals in the great struggles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Holland alone retained, thanks mainly to our generosity after the Napoleonic wars, important colonial possessions in the East Indian archipelago; but she had, and still has, no foothold on the mainland, and there was no Pan-Germanism in those days to urge the claims of Teutonic kinship upon the possessors of Java and Sumatra. The new German Empire and its world-policy were still unborn. France had only preserved in India itself a few harmless relics of a buried past, and she had not even begun to found her new Indo-Chinese Empire in the Pacific. In the Far East the Amur district and Vladivostok, let alone Manchuria and Port Arthur, still belonged to China. No "outer barbarian" challenged her supremacy in her Mongolian and Turkestan provinces, or sought to disturb her relations of suzerainty with Tibet. Russia's dominion in Asia, though it already covered a vast area, was confined to the then inhospitable steppes of Siberia and the still more inhospitable coast of the Northern Pacific. Its southern frontier ran round the northern and north-eastern shores of the Caspian in an easterly direction to

the Sea of Aral, skirting its western and northern shores to the mouth of the Syr Daria. Thence, after curving to the north for a short distance, it ran almost due east, till it reached the Chinese frontier near Kuldja. North-Eastern Persia, Afghanistan, and India were separated from Russia by a belt of territory averaging some 500 miles in breadth, over which the nomadic tribes and independent Khans of Central Asia held undisturbed sway.

Russian policy in Asia was still professedly governed by the principles solemnly laid down in a famous despatch from Count Nesselrode, elicited by the firmness of Lord Palmerston in 1838: "Both Great Britain and Russia," wrote Count Nesselrode to the Tsar's Ambassador in London, "must have the same interests at heart—the maintenance of peace in the centre of Asia and the avoidance of anything that might cause a general conflagration in those vast regions. To prevent such a misfortune the tranquillity of the intermediate territories which separate the Russian and British possessions must be sedulously preserved. To consolidate order in those countries, to avoid fomenting their jealousies, to confine rivalry to commercial competition, not to become involved in a struggle for political influence, and above all to respect the independence of the countries which separate us; that is, in our opinion, the system which both Governments are equally interested in pursuing in order to avert the possibility of a conflict between two great Powers who, to remain friends, must avoid friction or collision in the heart of Asia."

Most excellent principles indeed, but how has Russia carried them out in practice? How can they be reconciled with the changes which have already so pro-

foundly altered the whole situation in Asia and are still proceeding with ever-increasing rapidity? Russia has not only advanced right across the Continent of Asia to the Pacific, and consolidated her dominions by the construction of the greatest trunk railroad in the world, but she has moved southward all along the line with gigantic strides. In the west the Black Sea is, except in name, a Russian lake like the Caspian, and in the east a fortress more formidable than Sevastopol ever was is growing up at Port Arthur to command the entrance to the Gulf of Chi-li. The Central Asian Khanates and the Turcoman tribes have been swallowed up. The Trans-Caspian Railway skirting the north-eastern frontier of Persia runs through Merv to the boundary stones of Afghanistan, and Tashkend will shortly be connected by rail with the Siberian Railway, as it already is with the Caspian. Nor is the onward march of Russia to be measured merely by the tens of thousands of square miles which have been brought under direct subjection to her rule. She holds the Shah and the Central Government of Persia in the hollow of her hand by the twofold power of the sword and of the purse. In the northern provinces she is supreme in all but name, and she makes no secret of her intention to carry her ascendency down to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Her frontier marches with that of Afghanistan where the latter is most vulnerable. Further east, in Chinese Turkestan and Mongolia, her power waxes in proportion as that of Peking wanes, and all these outlying dependencies of the Chinese Empire are going the way that Manchuria has already gone. Even Tibet, the Forbidden Land of Buddhism, shows signs of yielding to her insistence. At her present rate of

expansion not many years are likely to elapse before she is in a position to join hands with France, who is pushing up steadily into the interior from her base on the Pacific, not merely up the valley of the Mekong, where she is already conterminous with Upper Burmah, but through Yun-nan into Sze-chuan and on to the upper waters of the Yang-tsze. Germany is firmly established in the Shantung peninsula in the Far East, and if she is not actually casting about for another Kiao-chau in the Persian Gulf, she clearly intends to push her influence down to its waters along the track of the Baghdad Railway.

The significance of such vast changes must be patent to anyone who takes the trouble to reconstitute the map of Asia as it was fifty years ago and compare it with what it is to-day, let alone what it may be within another generation. Other changes I have already noted which must be taken equally into account. Our supremacy in the Persian Gulf is no longer uncontested. France has treaty rights in Muscat. It is difficult to believe that Germany has no political *arrière pensée* in the combinations by which she is endeavouring to carry the Anatolian Railway down the valley of the Euphrates and Tigris to the Gulf. We have allowed Turkey and Persia to convert their nominal sovereignty over considerable sections of its shores into an effective authority, which is consistently exercised to the detriment of British interests. Our influence with the semi-independent tribes of Southern Persia has diminished in proportion as the power of the Central Government has increased — an increase which would have been impossible, in many cases, without our actual help, and, in all cases, without our easy-going acquiescence. Afghanistan has been transformed into a highly

centralised military state, equipped, for defence at least, with armaments scarcely less formidable than the mountain bulwarks with which nature has provided her. We may reasonably hope that Afghanistan's strength will be our strength, but it will be so only if we show ourselves strong—for in the East strength goes to strength. How often in the past has not the weakness of India been the opportunity of the Afghans? And is it not an Afghan proverb that says, "Always keep a watch on the friend of to-day, lest he be the enemy of to-morrow"? The Chinese Empire, upon whose "latent power" our Asiatic policy built so much during the middle decades of the last half-century, is sinking into a decline, and its extremities are already rotting away, though the vitality of the Chinese race may survive in the heart of the Eighteen Provinces. Siam has been saved for the present by the Anglo-French Agreement of 1896, but it can be saved permanently only by its own efforts, and whether those efforts will be continuous and effectual it would be a rash thing to prophesy.

The growth of rival political influences has reacted at the same time appreciably upon the domain of commerce. In Asia, as elsewhere, we have had a chief share in the vast development of trade and industry which the last half-century has witnessed all the world over. But our commercial pre-eminence, which formerly amounted almost to a monopoly, is no longer unchallenged. Its field has been circumscribed. Russia has practically ousted British trade from the whole of Central Asia by a policy of rigid exclusiveness. The commercial treaty she has recently imposed upon Persia has been skilfully framed to the same purpose. The results of French protectionism in Indo-China

have been almost equally detrimental. In spite of a nominal acceptance of the doctrine of the "open door," every continental power that acquires a fresh foothold in Asia is bent upon improving the opportunity to secure preferential advantages for itself. The construction of railways has, above all, been exploited with singular ingenuity for that purpose. Where our commerce still holds the field, foreign competition has enormously reduced the margin of profit. The volume of our trade continues to increase, but its remunerativeness no longer increases in the same proportion, and in many directions it is being outstripped by some of our younger rivals. Even in the carrying trade we no longer enjoy a monopoly, and, aided by a lavish system of bounties, German, French, and even Russian lines are displacing the red ensign of our mercantile marine.

What is there to be placed on the other side of the balance-sheet? With one notable exception, it is within the confines of India alone that can be found what may be called our gains. That exception is, of course, the rise of Japan as a great naval, military, and commercial power, admitted, and deservedly admitted, to the comity of civilised nations. The Anglo-Japanese alliance has given definite and permanent expression to a community of conservative interests which had already received practical illustration during the last crisis in the Far East. But, though the alliance must indirectly affect the political situation throughout Asia, its direct application is necessarily circumscribed. In India is the seat of our power, and here at least fifty years of effort have unquestionably deepened, extended, and consolidated it. The annexation of Burmah, though undertaken mainly to forestall rival

NATANZ: A WALLED VILLAGE IN CENTRAL PERSIA (p. 130)

Face p. 400

ambitions, has added to our Indian Empire a province of vast resources and increasing wealth, and, under Lord Curzon's administration, the frontier policy of the Indian Government within the territorial limits of its authority, direct and indirect, has been laid down on lines which should assure consistency in the future. Lord Kitchener's military administration is visibly destined to bear equally permanent fruit. The native army, of which the Mutiny completely shattered the framework, has long since been reconstituted on a new and sounder basis. It can never be an absolutely homogeneous force, as it has to be recruited amongst a variety of heterogeneous races. But, by steadily weeding out the less desirable elements, a more uniform standard of fighting efficiency can be established. This process has long been in progress, and when it has been completed, our Indian Army will be more than ever worthy to stand shoulder to shoulder with its British comrades. Another task which the new Commander-in-Chief has already taken up is that of the redistribution and concentration on more intelligent lines of our military forces in India, which are to a great extent scattered about the country in small detachments on exactly the same lines as were laid down immediately after the Mutiny, although the development of railways and other means of communication, together with many other new conditions, have entirely altered the situation in the course of half a century. The Imperial contingents placed at the disposal of the Indian Government by the ruling chiefs already constitute an addition to our fighting force, of which the material as well as the moral value cannot be overlooked. On the north-west frontier, upon which our attention has hitherto been concentrated, we hold a

position of which the natural strength for purposes of defence has been enhanced at vast cost by every device of military science. So long as the British Navy retains its pre-eminence, India can have nothing to fear in the shape of a hostile descent upon its shores. Powerful fleets, it is true, are now maintained in Asiatic waters by other countries besides ourselves, but neither Russia, nor France, nor Germany has hitherto acquired anything like the facilities for actual warfare we possess in the coaling stations and naval bases of our world-wide Empire.

If our position in India itself is so satisfactory, why not, it may be asked, rest contented with it as a more than adequate set-off against the decay, if decay there be, of our influence beyond its frontiers? Let us go on strengthening our position there by every means, so as to be thoroughly equipped against future aggression, but do not let us scatter our forces and fritter away our energies by going out to challenge superior odds in mere anticipation of hostile designs which may never mature. This is the view actually taken by some whose opinion is fully entitled to respect. Others, however, whose judgment is at least equally respectable, hold a diametrically opposite view. They contend, first of all, that we have interests beyond the frontiers of India which are Imperial rather than purely Indian, and that, independently of Indian considerations, we ought not to surrender them. Further, they contend that, strong as our position may be in India, it has been largely built up on our prestige as an Imperial Power, hitherto unrivalled in Asia, and that we cannot allow that prestige to be impaired under the watchful eyes of subject races, many of them deeply imbued with traditions of martial pride, without compromising our

hold upon their imagination—a hold at least as forceful as any material hold we have over them. The mere preliminary stages of the Russian advance have, moreover, already imposed heavy military burdens upon the revenues of India. How, they ask, will it be possible to meet the incalculable strain which will have to be put upon them when the very frontiers of India march with those of a great military power? Why should we invite such a consummation by an attitude of mere passive resignation? It is not suggested that we should adventure any aggressive opening, but merely that, like cautious chess players on the defensive, we should watch our antagonists' play, and instead of shifting our pieces aimlessly backwards and forwards over the board, as has too frequently been the case in the past, we should reply to their move step by step, with such counter-moves as are necessary to strengthen our defence. If other powers are free to build up their influence in regions where, a few decades ago, it was an unknown quantity, by an active policy of peaceful penetration, why should we refrain from consolidating, by a similar policy, the influence of which past generations of British enterprise have laid the foundations?

I have already put the case into the concrete shape it may be expected to assume first of all in the Persian Gulf and in Eastern Persia. Are we to surrender the political ascendency we have established in the Persian Gulf by a century of costly effort as guardians of the public peace in its waters, or are we to make it clearly understood that, whilst the Gulf is open to the pacific enterprise of other nations, it must remain closed to their territorial ambition? Or are we, after our disagreeable experiences of co-operation with Germany in China, to favour the importation of her influence into

the Gulf whilst still seeking to exclude that of other powers? Are we to run the risk of seeing Eastern Persia converted into another Manchuria, with a military railway, on the Manchurian model, running down to another Port Arthur on the Gulf or on the Indian Ocean, and turning the flank of Afghanistan and British Baluchistan, or are we to draw a line at which, by mutual consent or otherwise, Russia's policy of peaceful penetration from the north shall be met by a British policy of peaceful penetration from the south?

After a prolonged period of hesitation the British Government have made a formal declaration of policy with regard to the Persian Gulf and to British interests in the adjoining regions, which shows them to have realised the importance of the Imperial issues with which we stand confronted. It still remains for them to put into practice the principles of policy they have laid down. It will doubtless be urged that, if we pursue a policy of peaceful penetration from the south whilst Russia pursues a similar policy from the north, the moment must come when the two policies will clash and cease to be peaceful. It is a specious argument, but it would ill become those who hold, reasonably enough, that there is room in Asia for both Russia and ourselves. And what is perhaps more to the point, there is nothing to give force to it in the history of Russian expansion in Asia. Wherever Russia has come into contact only with what may be called the lower organisms of political life she has advanced steadily and relentlessly. To our periodical protests in such cases, that her advance threatened our interests, she has replied, in effect, "You have done nothing to materialise your interests. I cannot take heed of mere 'dog-in-the-manger' protest." But when she has been brought

face to face with substantial interests to which we were prepared to stand, she has recognised the expediency of coming to a direct understanding with us, as in the Pamirs and with reference to the northern frontiers of Afghanistan. As regards the Persian question, though the methods she has employed are in many ways open to criticism, and though her ultimate aims seriously threaten our interests, we have not, I submit, so far, any right to complain, because we have not ourselves, so far, taken up any well-defined position with regard to it. When Lord Palmerston conceived British interests to be threatened by the action of Russia in Persia and Afghanistan, he did not hesitate to address himself directly to St. Petersburg. "Such," he wrote to the British Ambassador in an exhaustive survey of the situation as it then presented itself, "were the professions and declarations of the Russian Government at St. Petersburg; but very different have been the proceedings of its agents"; and he added: "The British Government considers itself entitled to ask of the Cabinet of St. Petersburg whether the intentions and the policy of Russia towards Persia and towards Great Britain are to be deduced from the declarations of Count Nesselrode and M. Rodofinikin" (the responsible mouthpieces of the Russian Foreign Office), "or from the acts of Count Simonich and M. Vicovich" (the Russian agents whose conduct was under discussion). Lord Palmerston concluded by saying that "Her Majesty's Government is persuaded that the Cabinet of St. Petersburg will see in this communication a fresh proof of the anxious desire of the British Government to maintain unimpaired the friendly relations which so happily subsist between the two countries and to which it justly attaches so

great a value; because explanations sought for with frankness and in a friendly spirit tend to remove misunderstandings and to preserve harmony between nations." And Lord Palmerston was right; for his firmness promptly elicited from Count Nesselrode the declaration of which I have already quoted the most important passage, and many years elapsed before Russian policy was tempted to depart from the lines upon which it was framed. We have preferred of late years to play a game of hide-and-seek with Russia behind the Shah's Government, and it is a game which naturally suits her, as she can pull the wires of the Shah's Government to suit her convenience. She has taken every advantage of her opportunities, and small blame to her. But if ever she is brought up in Persia against substantial British interests to which we are prepared to stand, there is no reason to assume she will prove less amenable to the logic of facts than elsewhere. Only they must be facts, and not diplomatic fictions. The danger is that we may go on toying with diplomatic fictions until she has all the facts on her side, and then, of course, we shall be finally, and not undeservedly, put out of court. Then, also, when her policy of peaceful penetration has brought her down to the gates of India, we shall realise too late what the proximity of a great military power must mean on our Indian borderland, and the effect it must produce on the minds of our Indian population. And even if the Russian Government may be trusted never to embark upon those schemes of universal Asiatic dominion, which, nevertheless, already find favour in some influential circles in Russia, can we expect that Russian statesmen would not avail themselves of the advantages of close proximity to

India to exert irresistible pressure upon us at any moment of international crisis, or that ambitious Russian agents, military and political, would resist the temptations which such a vantage-ground would offer to their free-lance propensities?

I have given prominence to the Persian question because I believe it to be the most urgent, and I have dwelt at length upon its importance from the Indian point of view because that aspect is apt to be lost sight of in England. At the same time I have, I trust, made it understood that it is only part of the larger question of the security of our position as an Asiatic power. Its relative importance in relation to that larger question can, I admit, be gauged only by those who are in a position to appraise the resources and the requirements of our Empire as a whole in connection with the Far East and the Near East, as well as the Middle East. I have no wish to usurp in that respect the functions of the Committee of National Defence. My object has been to describe to the best of my ability the present situation, as I believe it to be, and not as we, and naturally Cabinet Ministers most of all, would wish it to be; to indicate the lines upon which it may be reasonably expected to develop; and to lay down certain principles which can be deduced from past experience for our future guidance. In Asia, perhaps, more than elsewhere, in view of the peculiar conditions under which we hold our Indian Empire, we need a consistent and continuous policy, moderate in its aims but unflinching in its execution, based upon a careful co-ordination of all the moral and material forces at our command, and upon a dispassionate estimate of those which may be arrayed against us. We are at a parting of the

ways. We have to steer clear equally of that "dog-in-the-manger" policy with which we have been, not always unjustly, reproached in the past, and of a wholesale and hasty surrender of legitimate interests, which would precipitate rather than avert the dangers inseparable from the transformation of the Asiatic continent into a field of contiguous European ambitions. Above all, we should avoid the alternations of irritating protests and graceful, or rather graceless, concessions, the mixture of bragging and nagging, and the futile exchange of assurances, given and taken in conscious disregard of all underlying realities, which, in the absence of any well thought out policy, have hitherto often caused much unnecessary friction, without in any way promoting our real interests and prestige.

The part of a critic is supposed to be an easy one. It is certainly not a pleasant one, and it is therefore with all the greater satisfaction that I feel able to turn in conclusion from the somewhat depressing retrospect of lost opportunities and energies frittered away in the past to the prospect of a better future, more in consonance with our Imperial traditions, interests, and duties, which, in spite of many grievous revelations of national weakness in other departments, the growing vigilance and energy of the British Government with regard to the great issues of Asiatic policy have of late opened up.

St. Petersburg
RUSS
Moscow
R. Dnieper
R. Danube
Samara
R. Volga
R. Don
R. Ural
Constantinople
Black Sea
TURKEY IN ASIA
Angora
Smyrna
Konia
Tiflis
Caspian Sea
Tabriz
Beirut
Acre
Mosul
Resht
Damascus
Jerusalem
Baghdad
Teheran
Khorasan
PERSIA
Basra
Muhammerah
Koweit
Seista
ARABIA
Medina
Bunder Abbas
Mecca
Muscat
Aden
Sketch Map of
ASIA
SHEWING RAILWAY EXPANSION
Constructed Lines
Lines in construction
Expansion of Russia since 1857
Extension of Russian influence

APPENDICES

PERSIA

TREATY OF PEACE BETWEEN HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND AND HIS MAJESTY THE SHAH OF PERSIA. SIGNED, IN THE ENGLISH AND PERSIAN LANGUAGES, AT PARIS, MARCH 4TH, 1857.

[Ratifications exchanged at Bagdad, May 2nd, 1857.]

In the name of God, the Almighty, the All-Merciful.

Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and His Majesty, whose standard is the Sun, the sacred, the august, the great monarch, the absolute king of kings of all the States of Persia, being both equally and sincerely animated by a desire to put a stop to the evils of a war, which is contrary to their friendly wishes and dispositions, and to re-establish on a solid basis the relations of amity which had so long existed between the two exalted States by means of a peace calculated for their mutual advantage and benefit, have appointed as their plenipotentiaries for carrying into effect this desired object the following, that is to say :—

Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland—the Right Honourable Henry Richard Charles, Baron Cowley, a Peer of the United Kingdom, a Member of Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Her Majesty's ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to His Majesty the Emperor of the French, etc., etc., etc.

And His Majesty the Shah of Persia—His Excellency the abode of greatness, the favourite of the king, Ferokh Khan,

Ameen-ool-Moolk, the great ambassador of the mighty State of Persia, the possessor of the royal portrait and of the blue cordon, the bearer of the diamond-studded girdle, etc., etc., etc.

Who, having exhibited and exchanged their full powers, and found them to be in due form, have agreed upon and concluded the following Articles:—

ARTICLE 1.—From the day of the exchange of the ratifications of the present Treaty there shall be perpetual peace and friendship between Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland on the one part and His Majesty the Shah of Persia on the other, as likewise between their respective successors, dominions, and subjects.

ARTICLE 2.—Peace being happily concluded between their said Majesties, it is hereby agreed that the forces of Her Majesty the Queen shall evacuate the Persian territory, subject to conditions and stipulations hereafter specified.

ARTICLE 3.—The high contracting parties stipulate that all prisoners taken during the war by either belligerent shall be immediately liberated.

ARTICLE 4.—His Majesty the Shah of Persia engages, immediately on the exchange of the ratifications of this Treaty, to publish a full and complete amnesty, absolving all Persian subjects who may have in any way been compromised by their intercourse with the British forces during the war from any responsibility for their conduct in that respect, so that no persons, of whatever degree, shall be exposed to vexation, persecution, or punishment on that account.

ARTICLE 5.—His Majesty the Shah of Persia engages further to take immediate measures for withdrawing from the territory and city of Herat, and from every other part of Afghanistan, the Persian troops and authorities now stationed therein; such withdrawal to be effected within three months from the date of the exchange of the ratifications of this Treaty.

ARTICLE 6.—His Majesty the Shah of Persia agrees to relinquish all claims to sovereignty over the territory and city of Herat and the countries of Afghanistan, and never to demand from the Chiefs of Herat, or of the countries of Afghanistan, any marks of obedience, such as the coinage, or "Khootbeh," or tribute.

His Majesty further engages to abstain hereafter from all interference with the internal affairs of Afghanistan. His Majesty promises to recognise the independence of Herat and of the whole of Afghanistan, and never to attempt to interfere with the independence of those States.

In case of differences arising between the government of Persia and the countries of Herat and Afghanistan, the Persian government engages to refer them for adjustment to the friendly offices of the British Government, and not to take up arms unless those friendly offices fail of effect.

The British Government, on their part, engage at all times to exert their influence with the States of Afghanistan, to prevent any cause of umbrage being given by them, or by any of them, to the Persian government; and the British Government, when appealed to by the Persian government, in the event of difficulties arising, will use their best endeavours to compose such differences in a manner just and honourable to Persia.

ARTICLE 7.—In case of any violation of the Persian frontier by any of the States referred to above, the Persian government shall have the right, if due satisfaction is not given, to undertake military operations for the repression and punishment of the aggressors; but it is distinctly understood and agreed to that any military force of the Shah which may cross the frontier for the above-mentioned purpose shall retire within its own territory as soon as its object is accomplished, and that the exercise of the above-mentioned rights is not to be made a pretext for the permanent occupation by Persia, or for the annexation to the Persian dominions, of any town or portion of the said States.

ARTICLE 8.—The Persian government engages to set at liberty without ransom, immediately after the exchange of the ratifications of this Treaty, all prisoners taken during the operations of the Persian troops in Afghanistan, and all Afghans who may be detained either as hostages or as captives on political grounds in any part of the Persian dominions shall, in like manner, be set free; provided that the Afghans, on their part, set at liberty, without ransom, the Persian prisoners and captives who are in the power of the Afghans.

Commissioners on the part of the two contracting powers

shall, if necessary, be named to carry out the provisions of this Article.

ARTICLE 9.—The high contracting parties engage that, in the establishment and recognition of Consuls-General, Consuls, Vice-Consuls, and Consular Agents, each shall be placed in the dominions of the other on the footing of the most favoured nation; and that the treatment of their respective subjects and their trade shall also, in every respect, be placed on the footing of the treatment of the subjects and commerce of the most favoured nation.

ARTICLE 10.—Immediately after the ratifications of this Treaty have been exchanged the British mission shall return to Tehran, when the Persian government agrees to receive it with the apologies and ceremonies specified in the separate note signed this day by the plenipotentiaries of the high contracting parties.

ARTICLE 11.—The Persian government engages, within three months after the return of the British mission to Tehran, to appoint a Commissioner, who, in conjunction with a Commissioner to be appointed by the British Government, shall examine into and decide upon the pecuniary claims of all British subjects upon the government of Persia, and shall pay such of those claims as may be pronounced just, either in one sum or by instalments, within a period not exceeding one year from the date of the award of the Commissioners, and the same Commissioners shall examine into and decide upon the claims on the Persian government of all Persian subjects, or the subjects of other powers, who, up to the period of the departure of the British mission from Tehran, were under British protection, which they have not since renounced.

ARTICLE 12.—Saving the provisions in the latter part of the preceding Article, the British Government will renounce the right of protecting hereafter any Persian subject not actually in the employment of the British mission, or of British Consuls-General, Consuls, Vice-Consuls, or Consular Agents, provided that no such right is accorded to or exercised by any other foreign powers; but in this, as in all other respects, the British Government requires, and the Persian government engages, that the same privileges and immunities shall in Persia be conferred upon and shall be

enjoyed by the British Government, its servants and its subjects, and that the same respect and consideration shall be shown for them, and shall be enjoyed by them, as are conferred upon and enjoyed by and shown to the most favoured foreign government, its servants and its subjects.

ARTICLE 13.—The high contracting parties hereby renew the agreement entered into by them in the month of August 1851 (Shawal 1267) for the suppression of the slave-trade in the Persian Gulf, and engage further that the said agreement shall continue in force after the date at which it expires, that is, after the month of August 1862, for the further space of ten years and for so long afterwards as neither of the high contracting parties shall, by a formal declaration, annul it; such declaration not to take effect until one year after it is made.

ARTICLE 14.—Immediately on the exchange of the ratifications of this Treaty, the British troops will desist from all acts of hostility against Persia, and the British Government engages further that as soon as the stipulations in regard to the evacuation by the Persian troops of Herat and the Afghan territories, as well as in regard to the reception of the British mission at Tehran, shall have been carried into full effect, the British troops shall, without delay, be withdrawn from all ports, places, and islands belonging to Persia; but the British Government engages that, during this interval, nothing shall be designedly done by the Commander of the British troops to weaken the allegiance of the Persian subjects towards the Shah, which allegiance it is, on the contrary, their earnest desire to confirm; and further, the British Government engages that, as far as possible, the subjects of Persia shall be secured against inconvenience from the presence of the British troops, and that all supplies which may be required for the use of those troops, and which the Persian government engages to direct its authorities to assist them in procuring, shall be paid for, at the fair market-price, by the British Commissariat immediately on delivery.

ARTICLE 15.—The present Treaty shall be ratified, and the ratifications exchanged at Bagdad in the space of three months, or sooner, if possible.

In witness whereof the respective plenipotentiaries have

signed the same and have affixed thereto the seal of their arms.

Done at Paris, in quadruplicate, this fourth day of the month of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty-seven.

(Sd.) COWLEY.
(Sd.) FEROKH (*in Persian*).

COMMERCIAL CONVENTION BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND PERSIA. SIGNED IN FRENCH AND PERSIAN AT TEHERAN, FEBRUARY 9TH, 1903. (TRANSLATION FROM THE FRENCH TEXT.)

His Majesty the King of Great Britain and Ireland, Emperor of India, and His Majesty the Shah of Persia, animated by the same desire to consolidate the Commercial relations between the two friendly Countries, have judged it expedient to modify and complete the arrangements constituted by the second paragraph of Article IX. of the Anglo-Persian Treaty signed at Paris on March 4th, 1857, and for this purpose have named as their Plenipotentiaries, viz. : —

His Majesty the King of Great Britain and Ireland, Emperor of India, Sir Arthur Hardinge, Knight Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George, His Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Court of Persia ; and

His Majesty the Shah of Persia, His First Minister, the Atta Bek Azam Ali Asghar Khan Amin-es-Sultan ; and M. Joseph Naus, Minister of State, Administrator-General of Customs and Posts ;

who, duly authorised for that purpose, have agreed as follows :—

ARTICLE 1.—Merchandise of British origin imported into Persia by British subjects, and, likewise, produce of Persia exported by British subjects, shall be subject to the Customs duties laid down in the detailed Tariffs (A) and (C) annexed to the present Declaration.

ARTICLE 2.—Merchandise of British origin imported into Persia (see Article 1) shall be liable to the payment of

Customs duties in conformity with Tariff (A), once for all, on its entry into Persia, and shall not thereafter be subjected to the payment of any other Customs duty, or other charges, with the exception of those provided for by Article 5 of the present Declaration.

It is formally stipulated that British subjects and imports into Persia, as well as Persian subjects and Persian imports into the British Empire, shall continue to enjoy under all conditions most-favoured-nation treatment; it is understood that a British Colony, having a special Customs Tariff, and which may cease to grant most-favoured-nation treatment to Persian imports, will no longer have the right to claim the same treatment for its own imports into Persia.

Persian products exported and destined for the United Kingdom shall pay Customs duty on their entry into the latter, in accordance with the General Tariff in force; subject to the reservation that such imports shall always have the benefit of most-favoured-nation treatment. In the event of the United Kingdom establishing duties in its general Tariff, without previous agreement with Persia, on the Persian products enumerated in Tariff (B) applicable to Persian imports into Russia (and annexed *ad memorandum* to the present Declaration), other than those now existing in the above-mentioned general Tariff, and higher than the duties laid down in the said Tariff (B), Persia shall have the right to impose, in its turn, corresponding duties on articles of the same description coming from the United Kingdom. A special Convention should be negotiated for this purpose; in default of agreement the present Declaration would become void, and both parties would again become subject to the former system laid down by Article IX. of the Treaty of Paris.

The Regulations imposed, or to be imposed as regards products, the importation of which is prohibited into the United Kingdom, and also as regards the export duties of the United Kingdom, shall be applicable to Persian trade in the latter.

ARTICLE 3.—The export duty of 5 per cent., hitherto in force in Persia, on exported merchandise and products, is entirely abolished, with the exception of the export duties imposed by Tariff (C) on the products therein mentioned.

British and Persian merchandise may, under the stipula-

tions of the present arrangement, be freely exported from one to the other of the two States, with the clearly understood exception of the prohibitions and restrictions already imposed or to be imposed by each of the two High Contracting Parties, either in the interests of public safety or preservation, or with a view to eventually prevent the exportation of products of the soil which it may, for the moment, be necessary to retain in order to secure the public supply of food.

ARTICLE 4. — The Persian Government undertakes to abolish all "rahdari" taxes now levied for the maintenance of caravan roads, and not to allow the establishment of other road or barrier taxes elsewhere than on carriage roads, including constructive works for which concession has already been, or may be, granted by special Firman. In the latter case, the rate of the taxes to be levied by the "concessionnaire" would be fixed by the Persian Government, who shall inform His Britannic Majesty's Legation thereof, such taxes not exceeding, per farsakh, those of the Resht-Tehran Road; their levy can only begin after the completion of the road, or at least of its principal branches between important localities, and in no case exceeding, in the case of British merchandise, the rates levied on merchandise arriving from elsewhere.

ARTICLE 5.—The system of farming out the collection of Customs duties in Persia, which it is necessary to abolish entirely, shall be replaced on all the frontiers of the kingdom by the establishment of Government Customs offices, organised and administered in such a way as to secure for traders equality of collection and a fair treatment of their merchandise.

The Persian Government will take all necessary steps to secure generally the safety of merchandise during its deposit in the Customs offices, and assumes direct responsibility for the integrity and proper preservation of merchandise which may be deposited in the warehouses of the Customs offices. Consequently, the Persian Government undertakes to have built as soon as possible, and in any case not later than the period specified below in clause (*a.*) of this Article, in the offices indicated for that purpose by a Regulation referred to hereafter, warehouses, properly secured and sufficiently large to provide for the storage of the quantity of merchan-

dise usually imported; in all other offices suitable provision shall be made in accordance with the needs of the trade passing through them. British traders shall enjoy, under the conditions laid down by the same Regulation, the right of storage in bond for twelve months, dating from the day of the arrival of the merchandise, without the payment of any dues or taxes for storage.

A General Regulation, drawn up by the Customs Administration, and which shall be established in agreement with the British Legation at Tehran, shall settle, as soon as possible after the coming into force of the present Convention—

(*a.*) The classification of the Customs offices and their functions, the points on the land and sea frontiers, and the roads open for the import and export of merchandise, as well as the organisation of the warehouses at the Customs offices and the date appointed for the commencement of the working of these offices and warehouses;

(*b.*) The formalities to be observed by traders for the import and export of merchandise;

(*c.*) The storage regulations to be applied to British merchandise during twelve months dating from its arrival at one of the offices open to this traffic;

(*d.*) The charges to be levied on trade while merchandise remains in Customs warehouses, or for any other services rendered by the Customs to traders;

(*e.*) The Customs procedure as regards the checking of merchandise liable to specific duties and the calculation of those imposed *ad valorem*, as well as the fines to be imposed in cases of fraud or of violation of the formalities and rules laid down.

As regards the Customs procedure applicable to merchandise entering or being exported from the United Kingdom, Persian subjects shall be under the laws in force, or to be put into force in the said kingdom; but the provisions of the latter shall not, in any manner whatsoever, sanction less favourable arrangements as regards the trade of Persian subjects than those applicable to traders of countries which enjoy most-favoured-nation treatment.

ARTICLE 6.—The payment of import duties in the United Kingdom shall be made in the currency sanctioned in that country for the payment of Customs duties.

As regards the application of Tariffs (A) and (C), the Persian batman of Tabreez shall be calculated at 640 Persian

miscals, equivalent to 2·97 French kilogrammes; and 100 Persian krans shall be calculated at the equivalent in English money of 48 French francs in gold.

In the event of the rate of the kran in relation to the franc falling more than 10 per cent., and remaining at that rate more than one month, the Persian Government shall have the right, after verification of the fact by the principal banks and previous notice to His Britannic Majesty's Legation, to raise proportionally the amount of the specific duties laid down in Tariffs (A) and (C). The notification respecting the increase of the duties shall be made by the Persian Government to the British Legation at Tehran at least two weeks before such increase shall be put into force.

In the event of a rise in the value of the kran exceeding 10 per cent., and remaining at that rate for more than one month, the British Government shall have the right to demand a proportional reduction of Tariffs (A) and (C), and the Persian Government shall be bound to grant the said reduction.

ARTICLE 7.—The Persian Government undertakes to apply the terms of the present Convention, together with Tariffs (A) and (C) with the modifications laid down in Article 6, to all the frontiers of the kingdom.

The present Declaration, of which, in case of dispute, the French text shall be binding, shall be ratified, and the ratifications shall be exchanged at Tehran. It shall be published by the two Governments, and shall come into force on a date to be agreed upon.

Done in duplicate, in French and Persian, the 9th February, 1903. (L.S.) ARTHUR H. HARDINGE.
(L.S.) NAUS.

The Persian text is stated to have been also signed by the Atabeg-Azam. The Tariffs A, B and C referred to in the above Convention were signed on the same date and in the same manner.

TREATY OF TURKMANCHAI BETWEEN RUSSIA AND PERSIA, 1828.

In the name of Almighty God. His Majesty the Most High, Most Illustrious, and Most Powerful Emperor and Autocrat of all the Russias, and His Majesty the

Shah of Persia, equally animated by a sincere desire to put a period to the evils of a war entirely contrary to their mutual wishes, and to re-establish on a solid basis the former relations of good neighbourhood and amity between the two States, through the medium of a peace, comprising in itself the guarantee of its duration, by the removal of all causes of future difference and misunderstanding, have appointed the following Plenipotentiaries charged with the execution of this salutary work, namely . . . who, after having met at Dekhargane and exchanged their full powers which were found in good and due form, have adopted and concluded the following Articles :—

ARTICLE 1.—There shall be established from this day peace, amity, and perfect understanding between His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias on the one part, and His Majesty the Shah of Persia on the other part, their heirs and successors, their respective States and subjects, in perpetuity.

ARTICLE 2.—Considering that the hostilities between the high contracting parties, now happily terminated, have caused the suspension of the obligations imposed on them by the Treaty of Gulistan, His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias and His Majesty the Shah of Persia have deemed it proper to replace the said Treaty of Gulistan by the present clauses and stipulations, which are intended to regulate and consolidate more and more the future relations of peace and amity between Russia and Persia.

ARTICLE 3.—His Majesty the Shah of Persia, as well in his own name as in that of his heirs and successors, cedes in full right and property to the Empire of Russia the Khanat of Erivan on either side of the Araxes, and the Khanat of Nackhtchivan. In consequence of this cession, His Majesty the Shah engages to cause the delivery to the Russian authorities within the space of six months at farthest from the signature of the present Treaty of all the archives and public documents concerning the administration of the two Khanats above mentioned.

ARTICLE 4 defines the line of demarcation.

ARTICLE 5.—His Majesty the Shah of Persia, in testimony of his sincere friendship for His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias, solemnly recognizes the present Article, in his own name and in that of his heirs and successors to the Throne of Persia, the appertainment for ever to the Empire

of Russia of all the countries and the islands situated between the line of demarcation indicated by the preceding Article on one side, and the ridge of the Caucassan Mountains and the Caspian Sea on the other, as also the wandering tribes who inhabit those territories.

ARTICLE 6.—With a view to compensate for the considerable sacrifices which the war between the two States has occasioned to the Empire of Russia, as well as the losses and injuries which have resulted therefrom to Russian subjects, His Majesty the Shah of Persia engages to make good these by the payment of a pecuniary indemnity. It is agreed between the two high contracting parties that the amount of this indemnity is fixed at ten crores of tomans, or thirty millions of silver roubles, and that the mode, time, and guarantee in respect to the payment of this sum shall be regulated by a separate arrangement.

ARTICLE 7.—His Majesty the Shah of Persia, having deemed it expedient to nominate, as his successor and heir presumptive, his august son the Prince Abbas Mirza, His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias, with a view to afford to His Majesty the Shah of Persia a public testimony of his amicable disposition, and of his desire to contribute towards the consolidation of this order of succession, engages to recognize henceforward in the august person of His Royal Highness the Prince Abbas Mirza the successor and heir presumptive of the Crown of Persia, and to consider him as the legitimate Sovereign of that kingdom from the moment of his accession to the throne.

ARTICLE 8. — Russian merchant vessels shall enjoy as formerly the right of navigating in freedom the Caspian Sea, and of landing on its coasts. They shall find in Persia aid and assistance in case of shipwreck. The same right is granted to Persian merchant vessels of navigating on the *ancient footing* the Caspian Sea, and of landing on the Russian banks, where in case of shipwreck the Persians shall receive aid and assistance reciprocally. With respect to ships of war those carrying the Russian military colours, being *ab antiquo* the only vessels which have had the right of navigating the Caspian Sea, that exclusive privilege is for this reason now equally reserved and secured to them, so that, with the exception of Russia, no other power shall be able to have ships of war in the Caspian Sea.

ARTICLE 9.—His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias and His Majesty the Shah of Persia, cordially desirous of drawing closer by every means the bonds so happily re-established between them, have agreed that the Ambassadors, Ministers, and Chargés d'Affaires who may be reciprocally delegated to the respective High Courts, whether on a temporary mission, or for the purpose of residing there permanently, shall be received with the honours and distinctions due to their rank, and suited to the dignity of the high contracting parties, as well as to the sincere friendship which unites them and the usages of the countries. In this respect the ceremonials to be observed on both sides shall be agreed upon by means of a special Protocol.

ARTICLE 10.—His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias, and His Majesty the Shah of Persia, considering the re-establishment and extension of the commercial relations between the two States as one of the principal benefits which the return of peace should produce, have agreed to regulate all the arrangements relative to the protection of commerce and the security of their respective subjects, as stated in a separate Act hereunto annexed, concluded between the respective Plenipotentiaries, and which shall be considered as forming an integral part of the present Treaty of Peace. His Majesty the Shah of Persia reserves to Russia as formerly the right of appointing Consuls or Commercial Agents wherever the good of commerce may require, and he engages to allow these Consuls or Agents, each of whom shall not have a suite of more than ten individuals under his protection, the enjoyment of the honours and privileges due to their public character.

His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias promises on his part to observe a perfect reciprocity in regard to the Consuls or Commercial Agents of His Majesty the Shah of Persia; in the event of any well-grounded complaint on the part of the Persian Government against any one of the Russian Consuls or Agents, the Minister or Chargé d'Affaires of Russia, residing at the Court of His Majesty the Shah, and under whose immediate orders they shall be placed, will suspend him from his functions and confer the charge provisionally on whomsoever he may think proper.

ARTICLE 11.—All the affairs and demands of their respective subjects, suspended by the event of the war, shall be

resumed and settled conformably to the principles of justice after the conclusion of peace. The debts which their respective subjects may have contracted among themselves shall be promptly and wholly liquidated.

ARTICLE 12.—The high contracting parties agree with a view to the interests of their respective subjects to fix a term of three years in order that those who possess simultaneously immovable property on either side of the Araxes may have the power to sell or to exchange the same freely. His Imperial Majesty of all the Russias excepts, nevertheless, from the benefits of this arrangement (as far as it respects them) the late Erivan Sirdar Hossein Khan, his brother Ha Jnu Khan, and Kurreem Khan, former Governor of Nacktchivan.

ARTICLE 13.—All prisoners of war made on either side, whether in the course of the last war or before, as well as the subjects of the two Governments who may have fallen into captivity at any period whensoever, shall all be freely delivered over within the term of four months, and after having been supplied with provisions and other necessary articles, they shall be sent to Abassabad to be there made over to the Commissioners respectively deputed to receive them and to take measures for their conveyance to their homes. The high contracting parties will adopt the same course in regard to all prisoners of war, and all Russian and Persian subjects reciprocally found in captivity who may not have been restored within the term above mentioned, either by reason of the distance at which they may have been, or owing to any other cause or circumstance whatever. The two Governments expressly reserve to themselves the unlimited right of claiming them at any time, and they bind themselves to restore them reciprocally, as soon as they shall present themselves, or shall be claimed.

ARTICLE 14.—The high contracting parties shall not demand the surrender of refugees and deserters who may have passed under their respective dominations before or during the war.

With a view, however, to prevent mutually the prejudicial consequences which might result from the communication which some of these refugees may maintain with their old compatriots, the Persian Government engages not to tolerate within its possessions situated between the Araxes and the line formed by the River called Tehan, the Lake of Aroomiah, the River of Djikaton, and by the River named Hizri Ozane,

as far as its confluence with the Caspian Sea, the presence of the individuals who shall be designated by name now, or who may be so indicated hereafter.

His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias promises equally on his part not to permit Persian refugees to settle in the Khanats of Karabagh and Nacktchivan, as well as in the portion of the Khanat of Erivan situated on the right bank of the Araxes. It is understood, however, that this clause is not, and shall not be, obligatory except in regard to individuals invested with a public character, or of a certain dignity, such as Khans, Begs, and Spiritual Chiefs or Mollahs, whose personal example, instigations, and clandestine communications might have a prejudicial influence on their old compatriots. As far as concerns the mass of the population in the two countries, it is agreed between the high contracting parties that their respective subjects who might have already passed, or who may hereafter pass, from one State into the other, shall be free to settle or sojourn wherever the Government under whose authority they may place themselves shall deem proper.

ARTICLE 15.—With the benevolent object of restoring tranquillity to their States, and removing from their subjects all that can aggravate the evils inflicted on them by the war to which the present Treaty has so happily put an end, His Majesty the Shah grants a full and entire amnesty to all the inhabitants and functionaries of the Province called Azerbijan. None of them without any exception shall be persecuted or molested for his opinions, acts, or conduct, either during the war, or during the temporary occupation of the said Province by the Russian troops. There shall be granted to them farther the term of one year from this date to remove freely with their families from the Persian Dominions into the Russian States, to export or to sell their property without the slightest opposition on the part of the Government, or the local authorities, or the imposition of any duty or fee on the effects or articles sold or exported by them. With regard to their immovable property, a period of five years shall be granted to them for its sale or disposal, according to their pleasure. From this amnesty are excepted those who may be guilty, within the period above mentioned of one year, of any crime or misdemeanour liable to penalties inflicted by the tribunals.

ARTICLE 16. — Immediately after the signature of the present Treaty of Peace, the respective Plenipotentiaries shall lose no time in transmitting to every quarter the necessary advices and instructions for the immediate cessation of hostilities.

The present Treaty drawn up in two parts of the same tenor, signed by the respective Plenipotentiaries, impressed with their seals, and exchanged between them, shall be confirmed and ratified by His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias and His Majesty the Shah of Persia, and the solemn ratifications bearing their own signatures shall be exchanged between their Plenipotentiaries within the term of four months, or earlier if possible.

Signed by the Plenipotentiaries of the High Contracting Parties, Camp Turkmanchai, the 21st February 1828.

SEPARATE COMPACT (RELATIVE TO COMMERCE AND THE SECURITY OF RUSSIAN AND PERSIAN SUBJECTS RESPECTIVELY) REFERRED TO IN ARTICLE X. OF THE TREATY OF TURKMANCHAI.

The two high contracting parties, desirous that their respective subjects shall enjoy all the advantages resulting from freedom of commerce on both sides, have agreed upon the following articles. Russian subjects provided with passports in due form shall be allowed to trade throughout the whole extent of the kingdom of Persia, and also to proceed to the States adjoining the said kingdom. In return for which Persian subjects shall be allowed to import their merchandize into Russia either by the Caspian Sea or by the frontier land separating Russia from Persia, to barter them or to make purchases for exportation; and they shall enjoy all the rights and privileges accorded in the States of His Imperial Majesty to the subjects of the most favoured friendly powers. In the event of the death of a Russian subject in Persia, his movable and immovable property, as belonging to a subject of a friendly power, shall be entirely made over to his relations or partners who shall have the right to dispose of the said property as they may think fit. In default of relations or partners the disposal of these same goods shall be entrusted to the Mission, or to the Consuls of Russia without any opposition on the part of the local authorities.

ARTICLE 2.—Contracts, bills of exchange, securities and other engagements passed in writing between the respective subjects in connection with their business transactions shall be registered before the Russian Consul and before the Hakim (Civil Judge), and in places where there may be no Consul, before the Hakim alone, so that in case of dispute between the two parties it may be possible to make the necessary investigation with a view to decide the difference in conformity with justice. If one of the two parties, without being provided with documents drawn up and legalized as mentioned above, which shall be valid before either Court of justice, should wish to institute an action against the other by simply producing witnesses, such claims shall not be admitted unless the defendant himself should acknowledge their validity. Every engagement contracted between the respective subjects [of the two powers] in the forms above prescribed shall be scrupulously observed, and every refusal to abide by it that might occasion loss to one of the parties, shall be visited with a proportionate indemnity from the other party. In case of the failure of a Russian merchant in Persia, his creditors shall be paid out of the goods and effects of the insolvent; but the Minister, the Chargé d'Affaires, or the Consul of Russia shall not refuse their good offices, if need be, to ascertain if the insolvent has not left in Russia disposable property which might serve to satisfy the said creditors. The friendly stipulations in the present Article shall be reciprocally observed with regard to Persian subjects who trade in Russia under the protection of the laws.

ARTICLE 3.—In order to secure to the commerce of the respective subjects the advantages which form the subject of the foregoing stipulations, it is agreed that the merchandize imported into Persia or exported from that kingdom by Russian subjects, and in like manner the produce of Persia imported into Russia by Persian subjects either by the Caspian Sea or by the frontier land between the two States, as well as Russian merchandize which Persian subjects might export from the Empire by the same routes, shall be liable as heretofore to a duty of five per cent. levied once for all at their entrance or exit, and shall not thereafter be subjected to the payment of any other customs duty. If Russia should deem it necessary to make new customs regulations

and new tariffs, she nevertheless engages even in that case not to increase the duty of five per cent. mentioned above.

ARTICLE 4.—If Russia or Persia should be involved in war with another Power, their respective subjects shall not be prohibited from passing with their merchandize through the territories of the high contracting parties in order to proceed to the States of the said power.

ARTICLE 5.—Seeing that, according to the existing usages in Persia, it is difficult for foreign subjects to find houses, ware-rooms or proper places for the storage of their merchandize to let, it is permitted to Russian subjects in Persia not only to rent, but also to acquire, by every right of ownership, houses to dwell in, as well as ware-rooms and places in which to deposit their merchandize. The servants of the Persian Government shall not be allowed to enter by force the said houses, ware-rooms or places without having recourse, in case of necessity, to the authority of the Minister, or of the Chargé d'Affaires, or of the Consul of Russia, who shall depute an officer or dragoman to be present at the inspection of the house or of the merchandize.

ARTICLE 6.—In like manner, if the Minister or Chargé d'Affaires of His Imperial Majesty, the servants of the Russian Mission, the Consuls and dragomans should find it difficult in Persia to purchase suitable materials for their clothing, or several other necessary articles of consumption, they shall be allowed to send for, on their own account, free of duty and other charges, all goods and articles which are destined exclusively for their private use. The public Agents of His Majesty the Shah residing in the States of the Russian Empire shall enjoy perfect reciprocity in this respect. Persian subjects forming part of the suite of the Minister or Chargé d'Affaires, or Consuls, and indispensable for their service, shall enjoy, so long as they may remain with them, their protection equally with Russian subjects; but if it should happen that one among them should commit some misdemeanour, and should thereby incur the penalty of the existing laws, in that case the Persian Minister or the Hakim, and in his absence the competent local authority, shall immediately apply to the Minister, Chargé d'Affaires, or Russian Consul in whose service the accused may be, in order that he may be delivered up to justice; and if this application be founded on proofs establishing the guilt of the

accused, the Minister, Chargé d'Affaires, or Consul shall make no difficulty whatever in complying with it.

ARTICLE 7.—All lawsuits and litigations between Russian subjects shall be submitted exclusively to the investigation and decision of the Mission or of the Consuls of Russia in conformity with the laws and customs of the Russian Empire. So also shall disputes and lawsuits arising between Russian subjects and those of another Power, in case the two parties shall consent to such a course. Whenever any disputes or lawsuits shall arise between Russian and Persian subjects, the said lawsuits or disputes shall be brought before the Hakim or Governor, and shall not be investigated and decided except in the presence of the Dragoman of the Mission or of the Consulate. Once judiciously disposed of, such suits shall not be allowed to be instituted a second time. If, however, circumstances should be of such a nature as to render a second trial necessary, it shall not take place without previous intimation being given to the Minister, or the Chargé d'Affaires, or the Consul of Russia; and in that case the action shall be brought and decided only in the Dufter, that is to say, in the Supreme Court of the Shah at Tabriz or at Teheran, likewise in the presence of a Dragoman of the Mission or of the Russian Consulate.

ARTICLE 8.—In case of murder or any other crime committed among Russian subjects, the investigation and decision of the case shall be within the exclusive province of the Minister or Chargé d'Affaires, or Consul of Russia, in virtue of the jurisdiction delegated to them over their own countrymen. If a Russian subject should happen to be implicated with individuals of another nation in a criminal suit, he shall not be prosecuted nor molested in any way without proofs of his participation in the crime; and even in that case, as in the one in which a Russian subject should be charged with direct culpability, the tribunals of the country shall not be competent to proceed with the trial and judgment of the crime except in the presence of a delegate of the Mission or of the Russian Consulate, and if there should be none on the spot in which the crime has been committed, the local authorities shall take steps to send the delinquent to a place where there is a Consul or a constituted Russian Agent. The evidence both for and against the accused shall be faithfully taken by the Hakim and by the Judge of the place, and

river at Tchakan Kale. From Tchakan Kale it runs in a northerly direction to the ridge of the mountains dividing the Chandir and Sumbar valleys, and extends along the ridge of these mountains in an easterly direction, descending to the bed of the Sumbar at the spot where the Ach-Agaian stream falls into it. From this point eastward the bed of the Sumbar marks the frontier as far as the ruins of Medjet Dainé. Thence the road to Durrun forms the frontier-line as far as the ridge of the Kopet Dagh, along the ridge of which the frontier extends south-eastward, but before reaching the upper part of the Giamab Pass turns to the south along the mountain heights dividing the valley of the Sumbar from the source of the Giamab. Thence taking a south-easterly direction across the summits of the Misino and Tchoubest Mountains, it reaches the road from Giamab to Rabab, passing at a distance of 1 verst to the north of the latter spot. From this point the frontier-line runs along the ridge of the mountains as far as the summit of the Dalang Mountain, whence passing on the northern side of the village of Khairabad it extends in a north-easterly direction as far as the boundaries of Geok Keital. From the boundaries of Geok Keital the frontier-line crosses to the gorge of the River Firuze, intersecting that gorge on the northern side of the village of Firuze. Thence the frontier-line takes a south-easterly direction to the summits of the mountain-range bounding on the south the valley, through which the road from Askabad to Firuze passes, and runs along the crest of these mountains to the most easterly point of the range. From here the frontier-line crosses over to the northernmost summit of the Aselm range, passing along its ridge in a south-easterly direction, and then skirting round to the north of the village of Keltechinar it runs to the point where the Ziri Kou and Kizil Dagh Mountains join, extending thence south-eastward along the summits of the Ziri Kou range, until it issues into the valley of the Baba Durmaz stream. It then takes a northerly direction, and reaches the oasis at the road from Gavars to Lutfabad, leaving the fortress of Baba Durmaz to the east.

ARTICLE 2.—Whereas, in Article 1 of the present Convention, the principal points are indicated through which the frontier between the possessions of Russia and Persia is to pass, the High Contracting Parties are to appoint Special

Commissioners with a view of accurately tracing on the spot the frontier-line, and of erecting proper boundary-marks. The date and place of meeting of the said Commissioners shall be mutually agreed upon by the High Contracting Parties.

ARTICLE 3.—Whereas the forts of Giamab and Kulkulab, situated in the gorge through which the stream watering the soil of the Trans-Caspian province passes, lie to the north of the line which, in virtue of Article 1 of the present Convention, is to serve as the boundary between the territories of the two High Contracting parties, the Government of His Majesty the Shah engage to evacuate the said forts within the space of one year from the date of the exchange of the ratifications of the present convention, but shall have the right during the said period to remove the inhabitants of Giamab and Kulkulab to within the Persian frontier, and to establish them there.

On its part the Government of the Emperor of All the Russias engage not to erect fortifications in these said localities nor to establish any Turcoman families therein.

ARTICLE 4.—Whereas the sources of the River Firuze, as well as of other streams watering the soil of the Trans-Caspian province contiguous to the Persian frontier, lie within the Persian territory, the Government of His Majesty the Shah engage on no account whatever to permit the establishment of fresh settlements along the course of the said streams and rivulets from their sources to the point where they leave Persian territory, and not to extend the area of land at present under cultivation, and under no pretence whatever to turn off the water in larger quantities than is necessary for irrigating the fields now under cultivation within the Persian territory. With a view to the immediate observance and fulfilment of this stipulation the Government of His Majesty the Shah engage to appoint a sufficient number of competent Agents, and to subject any infringer thereof to severe punishment.

ARTICLE 5.—With a view to the development of commercial intercourse between the Trans-Caspian province and Khorassan, both High Contracting Parties engage to come to a mutually advantageous agreement as soon as possible for the construction of waggon-roads suitable for commercial traffic between the above-mentioned provinces.

ARTICLE 6.—The Government of His
of Persia engage to strictly prohibit the
Majesty's dominions, along the whole ext
of the Provinces of Asterabad and Khora
and war material, and likewise to adopt m
arms being supplied to the Turcomans r
territory. The Persian frontier authoritie
most effective support to the Agents of the
Government, whose duty it shall be to wa
not exported from the Persian territory.
of His Majesty the Emperor of All the R
engage to prevent arms and war materi
from Russian territory to Turcomans livi

ARTICLE 7.—With a view to the observa
of the stipulations of the present conventi
regulate the proceedings of the Turcoma
Persian frontier, the Government of His M
of All the Russias shall have the right to
to the frontier points of Persia. In all qu
the observance of order and tranquillity in
tiguous to the possessions of the High Co
the appointed Agents will act as intermed
tions between the Russian and Persian aut

ARTICLE 8.—All engagements and stipul
Treaties and Conventions concluded up to
the two High Contracting Parties shall

ARTICLE 9.—The present convention,
and signed by the Plenipotentiaries of
have affixed to it the seal of their arms,
and ratified by His Majesty the Shah o
Majesty the Emperor and Autocrat of All
ratifications to be exchanged between the
both parties at Tehran within the space
earlier if possible.

Done at Tehran, the $\frac{9\text{th}}{21\text{st}}$ December, 1881,
to the Mussulman date of the 29th Muhar

(L.S.) MIRZA-SAID-K
Foreign Aff

(L.S.) IVAN ZENOV

RUSSO-PERSIAN COMMERCIAL CONVENTION.

(SIGNED AT TEHERAN ON $\frac{\text{OCTOBER 27,}}{\text{NOVEMBER 9,}}$ 1901.)

Sa Majesté l'Empereur de toutes les Russies et sa Majesté le Schah de Perse, animés du même désir de faciliter le développement des relations commerciales entre les deux pays voisins et amis, ont jugé opportun de modifier et de compléter les dispositions établies par l'Article III de l'acte additionnel conclu entre la Russie et la Perse a Tourkmentchaï le 10/22 février 1828 et ont nommé a cet effet pour leurs plénipotentiaires, savoir : sa Majesté l'Empereur de toutes les Russies, son Envoyé Extraordinaire et Ministre Plénipotentiaire près la cour de Perse Conseiller privé Argyropoulo et le Conseiller privé Valentin Goloubew, membre du Conseil du Ministre des Finances ; et sa Majesté le Schah de Perse, son Premier Ministre, L'Atabek-Azam Mirza Ali Asghar Khan Amin-es-Sultan, et le sieur Joseph Naus, Administrateur Général des Douanes, lesquels dûment autorisés a cet effet sont convenus de ce qui suit :

ARTICLE I.—Les marchandises importées en Perse ou exportées de ce Royaume par les sujets russes et pareillement les productions de la Perse importées en Russie soit par la mer Caspienne, soit par la frontière de terre entre les deux Etats par les sujets persans, de même que les marchandises russes que les sujets persans exporteront de l'Empire par les mêmes voies, seront soumises non plus à la taxation prévue par l'article III de l'acte additionnel du 10/22 février 1828, mais à des tarifs détaillés (*A. B. C.*) qui se trouvent annexés à la présente Déclaration.

ARTICLE II.—Les marchandises exportées de Russie (voir article I) seront soumises au payement des droits de douane conformément au tarif *A* une fois pour toutes à leur entrée en Perse et ne seront assujetties ensuite au payement d'aucun autre droit de douane ou d'autres charges, sauf celles prévues par l'article V de la présente Déclaration.

Les produits persans exportés en Russie (voir article I) payeront les droits de douane à leur entrée en Russie conformément au tarif *B* et ne seront assujettis à aucun droit de sortie ou autre charge à leur exportation de Perse, sauf

les exceptions prévues dans les articles III et V de la présente Déclaration.

Toutes les marchandises et objets d'exportation persans non dénommés dans le tarif *B* seront soumis en Russie au payement des droits d'entrée stipulés par les tarifs applicables aux provenances des nations les plus favorisées, sauf les tarifs établis ou à établir pour les produits d'exportation de la Chine et d'autres pays asiatiques voisins.

Les règlements édictés ou à édicter pour les produits prohibés à l'importation en Russie et aussi pour les droits de sortie de la Russie seront applicables au trafic persan en Russie.

ARTICLE III.—Le droit de sortie de 5% existant jusqu'à présent en Perse sur les marchandises et produits exportés est totalement aboli, à l'exception des droits de sortie établis par le tarif *C* sur les produits y dénommés.

Les marchandises russes et persanes pourront aux conditions du présent arrangement être librement exportées de l'un dans l'autre des deux Etats sous la réserve, bien entendu, des interdictions ou prohibitions déjà établies ou à établir par chacune des deux Hautes Parties Contractantes, soit dans un intérêt de sécurité ou de préservation sociale, soit pour empêcher éventuellement l'exportation de produits du sol qu'il serait momentanément nécessaire de réserver afin d'assurer l'alimentation publique.

ARTICLE IV.—Le Gouvernement Persan prend l'engagement de supprimer toutes les taxes de *raghdari* perçues actuellement pour l'entretien des routes et de ne pas permettre l'établissement d'autres taxes de routes ou de barrière ailleurs que sur les voies carrossables comportant des travaux d'art dont la concession a déjà été accordée ou serait accordée par firmans spéciaux. Les taux des taxes à percevoir dans ce cas par les concessionnaires seraient fixés par le Gouvernement Persan qui en donnera connaissance à la Légation Imperiale de Russie, ces taxes ne devant pas dépasser par *farsakh* celle de la route Recht-Téhéran ; la perception ne pourrait commencer qu'après l'achèvement de la route ou du moins de ses principaux tronçons entre des localités importantes et ne dépasserait en aucun cas pour les marchandises russes les taux prélevés des marchandises d'une autre provenance.

ARTICLE V.—Le système de fermage pour la perception des droits de douane en Perse devant être aboli à jamais sera remplacé à toutes les frontières du Royaume par l'institution de bureaux de douane gouvernementale, organisés et administrés de manière à assurer aux commerçants l'égalité des perceptions et un bon traitement de leurs marchandises.

Le Gouvernement Persan prendra toutes les mesures nécessaires pour assurer d'une manière générale la sécurité des marchandises durant leur séjour dans les bureaux de la Douane et il assume la responsabilité directe de l'intégrité et de la bonne conservation des marchandises qui seront déposées dans les magasins des bureaux de la Douane. En conséquence, le Gouvernement Persan s'engage à faire construire, aussitôt que possible et en tout cas pas plus tard que cela est indiqué ci-dessous dans la clause *a* de cet article, dans les bureaux désignés à cet effet par un règlement prévu ci-après, des magasins dûment clôturés et assez vastes pour y assurer l'emmagasinage des quantités de marchandises habituellement importées ; dans tous les autres bureaux il devra être établi des installations convenables en rapport avec les besoins du trafic de passage. Les commerçants russes jouiront, dans les conditions fixées par le même réglement, du droit d'entrepôt pendant douze mois à dater du jour de l'arrivée des marchandises sans payer aucuns droits ni taxes pour la mise en entrepôt.

Un règlement général, arrêté par l'Administration des Douanes d'accord avec la Légation de Russie à Téhéran, fixera avant la mise en vigueur de la présente convention :

a) la classification des bureaux de douane et leurs attributions, les points des frontières de terre et de mer et les chemins ouverts pour l'importation et l'exportation des marchandises, ainsi que l'organisation des magasins des bureaux de la Douane et la fixation des termes indiquant l'inauguration des opérations de ces bureaux et magasins ;

b) les formalités à observer par le commerce pour l'importation et l'exportation des marchandises ;

c) le régime de l'entrepôt applicable aux marchandises russes pendant douze mois à partir de leur arrivée dans un des bureaux ouverts à ce trafic ;

d) les payements à imposer au commerce pour le séjour des marchandises dans les magasins de la douane ou pour tous autres services rendus par la douane aux commerçants ;

e) la procédure douanière concernant la vérification des marchandises frappées de droits spécifiques et l'évaluation de celles imposées *ad valorem*, ainsi que les amendes applicables au cas de fraude ou de violation des formalités et règles établies.

Pour ce qui concerne la procédure douanière applicable aux marchandises à l'entrée ou à la sortie du territoire russe, les sujets persans seront soumis aux lois édictées ou à édicter par l'Empire, sans que les dispositions de celles-ci puissent de quelque manière que ce soit consacrer à l'égard du commerce des sujets persans des dispositions moins favorables que celles qui sont applicables aux commerçants des pays jouissant du traitement de la nation la plus favorisée.

ARTICLE VI.—L'acquittement des droits d'entrée en Russie d'après le tarif *B* annexé à la présente Déclaration sera effectué en monnaies admises pour le payement des taxes douanières dans tout l'Empire, calculé sur la base du poud équivalant à 40 livres russes, à 16,38 kilogrammes français, à 5,5 batmans de Tauris de 640 miskals persans. Pour l'application des tarifs *A* et *C* le batman persan dit de Tauris sera calculé à 640 miskals persans équivalant à 7,27 livres russes et à 2,97 kilogrammes français, et les 100 krans persans seront calculés à 18 roubles russes ou 48 francs français en monnaie d'or.

Dans le cas où le change du kran par rapport au rouble russe viendrait à baisser de plus de 10% et se maintiendrait tel plus d'un mois, le Gouvernement Persan aurait la faculté, après la constatation du fait par les principales banques et notification préalable à Légation Imperiale de Russie, de hausser proportionnellement les taux des droits spécifiques inscrits dans les tarifs *A* et *C*. La notification relativement à l'élévation des droits devra être faite par le Gouvernement Persan à la Légation de Russie à Téhéran au moins deux semaines avant que cette élévation soit appliquée.

Pour le cas d'une hausse dans le cours du kran dépassant 10% et se maintenant tel durant plus d'un mois, l'initiative de l'abaissement proportionnel des tarifs *A* et *C* appartiendrait au Gouvernement Imperial de Russie et le Gouvernement Persan serait tenu d'accorder le dit abaissement.

ARTICLE VII.—Le Gouvernement Persan s'engage à appliquer à toutes les frontières du Royaume les dispositions de

la présente Déclaration ainsi que les tarifs *A* et *C* avec les modifications prévues par l'article VI.

La présente Déclaration, dont, en cas de contestation, le texte français prévaudra, sera ratifiée et les ratifications en seront échangées à Téhéran, après quoi elle sera promulguée par les deux Hauts Gouvernements et entrera en vigueur à la date qui sera fixée d'un commun accord le jour de l'échange des ratifications.

Fait double, en français et en persan, le 27 octobre de l'an 1901, et le 26 Redjeb 1319 de l'Hégire, à Téhéran.

(signé) Argyropoulo (L.S.) (signé) Atabek-Azam (L.S.)
(signé) Goloubew (L.S.) (signé) Mouchir-oud-Dovleh (L.S.).
(signé) Naus (L.S.).

The three tariffs *A*, *B*, and *C* annexed to this Convention bear the same date.

PROTOCOLE.

Nous soussignés nous étant réunis ce samedi le 13 décembre 1902 (le 12 Ramazan 1320) avons procédé à l'échange des exemplaires de la Déclaration, signée à Téhéran le 27 octobre/9 novembre 1901 (le 26 Redjeb 1319 de l'Hégire) ratifiée par Leurs Majestes l'Empereur de Russie et le Schah de Perse et avons, conformément aux dispositions prévues par l'art. VII de la dite Déclaration, fixé la date du 1/14 février 1903 pour son entrée en vigueur.

En foi de quoi le présent protocole a été dressé en deux exemplaires et signé par nous.

(signé) Atabek-Azam. (L.S.) (signé) P. Wlassow.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND RUSSIA WITH REFERENCE TO THE INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF PERSIA. 1834-1888.

In 1834, on the occasion of the nomination by the Shah of Persia of Mahommed Merza as his successor, an "Understanding" was come to between the British and Russian

Governments to respect the Integrity and Independence of Persia. No formal Treaty has been concluded on the subject, but this understanding has since been confirmed on several occasions, the last occasion being on the 12th of March, 1888. It was first recorded in a despatch addressed by Viscount Palmerston to H.M.'s Ambassador at St. Petersburg on the 5th September, 1834.

The following is a copy of that Despatch :—

Viscount Palmerston to Mr. Bligh.

Foreign Office, September 5th, 1834.

In acknowledging the receipt of your despatch of the 6th August [respecting the Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan], I have to instruct you to take an opportunity of expressing to the Russian Government the satisfaction of His Majesty's Government at the decision which has been taken by the Shah of Persia to nominate Mahommed Merza as the successor to his throne; an event which, it is to be hoped, will avert the danger of civil war in Persia on the next demise of the Crown; and you will also say that His Majesty's Government are gratified to find that the Governments of Great Britain and Russia are acting, with regard to the affairs of Persia, in the same spirit, and are equally animated by a sincere desire to maintain, not only the internal tranquillity, but also the Independence and Integrity of Persia.

His Majesty's Government will, at all times, find a real pleasure in co-operating with that of Russia for such purposes; and instructions have been sent to the British Resident at Tehran to communicate confidentially with the Russian Representative, in furtherance of the common views of the two Governments.

In November, 1838, Russia alluded to the "happy agreement of views and actions" which the two Governments had so much at heart to form in 1834, and a copy of the foregoing despatch, written by Lord Palmerston to Mr. Bligh in September, 1834, was forwarded from St. Petersburg to the Russian Ambassador in London, in order that he might show it to Lord Palmerston, with an assurance that the same desire which then influenced the Russian Government

to have a friendly understanding with England upon the affairs of Persia still existed, and an expression of regret upon the part of Russia that the good understanding which had existed between the Court of London and that of Tehran was disturbed for the time.

Lord Palmerston expressed his entire satisfaction at receiving this declaration that the Russian policy with regard to Persia remained unchanged, and that it was the same which the two Powers had agreed to adopt in 1834.

The following are extracts from the correspondence which passed in 1838 :—

Count Nesselrode to Count Posso di Borgo.—(Communicated by Count Posso di Borgo, November 11.)

(Translation.)

(Extract.) *St. Petersburgh, October* 20 (*November* 1), 1838.

It will not be without advantage, M. le Comte, to place again before Lord Palmerston at the present time the despatch, which at that period he addressed to the Minister of England at St. Petersburgh, and which the latter was then directed to communicate to us.

Your Excellency will find a copy of it annexed. With this document in your hand, you will have the goodness, M. l'Ambassadeur, to make known to Lord Palmerston that the same sentiments which guided us in 1834, and which led us at the time to desire a friendly understanding with England upon the affairs of Persia, are now also the motive of the present step, and inspire us with the full confidence of seeing it lead to results fully as satisfactory as that which preceded it.

. . . . .

Assuredly, it will rest with that Government alone to re-establish between the Missions of Russia and of Great Britain at Tehran that happy agreement of views and of actions which we had so much at heart to form in 1834, and which had at that time been attended with consequences so beneficial for the consolidation of the internal tranquillity of the Persian Monarchy."

Viscount Palmerston to Count Posso di Borgo.

(Extract.) *Foreign Office, December* 20, 1838.

THE despatch from Count Nesselrode which your Excellency has communicated to me contains upon these points assurances the most full and complete; and Her Majesty's Government accept as entirely satisfactory the declarations of the Imperial Cabinet that it does not harbour any designs hostile to the interests of Great Britain in India; that its own policy with respect to Persia remains unchanged, and is the same which in 1834 the two Powers agreed to adopt.

The understanding of 1834 was again alluded to in the following Russian despatch written in January, 1839:—

Count Nesselrode to Count Posso di Borgo.—(Communicated by Count Posso di Borgo, February 25.)

(Translation.)

(Extract.) *St. Petersburgh, January* 29, 1839.

THE Government of Her Britannic Majesty has received from us the formal assurance that it in no wise enters into the views of our Cabinet to desire to direct the slightest hostile combination against the security of the English possessions in India; and that, far from that, our policy, in respect to Persia, has invariably remained the same as it was in 1834, at the time when a perfect understanding was so happily established on this matter between Russia and England.

In return for this clear and precise declaration, we consider that, on our part, we may rely upon the intention and upon the desire which the British Cabinet has, on its part, expressed, to the effect of replacing the order of things in Persia on its ancient footing, by re-establishing its relations of friendship and good understanding with that country.

These despatches were laid before Parliament in 1839, with other papers relating to the affairs of Persia and Afghanistan, and the passages quoted above are to be found at pages 3, 191, and 192.

In June, 1873, the Persian Government inquired what understanding existed between Great Britain and Russia

respecting the maintenance of the integrity of Persia, when it was informed of what had passed in 1834 and 1838 in a note which was addressed by Earl Granville to the Sadr Azem, of which the following is a copy:—

Earl Granville to Sadr Asem.

Foreign Office, July 2, 1873.

YOUR Highness, in your letter of the 30th June, has expressed a wish to be made acquainted officially with what may have passed between Great Britain and Russia in regard to the maintenance of the integrity of Persia. I have the honour, in reply, to state to your Highness that, although no formal Treaty or agreement exists by which the two countries mutually agree to respect the integrity of Persia, yet that, in the year 1834, an understanding was arrived at between the two Governments on the occasion of the nomination of Mahomed Meerza as successor to the Throne of Persia. That understanding was based on the sincere desire of the two Governments to maintain, not only the internal tranquillity, but also the independence and integrity of Persia; and in the year 1838 Count Nesselrode adverted to the agreement entered into by the two Governments as still subsisting in full force, as it was also acknowledged to do by Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Her Majesty's Government, as they recognise for themselves the principles which guided the general policy of Great Britain and Russia in favour of the independence and integrity of Persia in the year 1834, have reason to believe, from information which they have received from Lord Loftus, Her Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburgh, that the Russian Government refer with satisfaction to the mutual assurances which were made on this subject in 1834 and 1838. Her Majesty's Government consider that the best mode of confirming both Powers in those sentiments is, that Persia, while steadily maintaining her rights as an independent Power, should studiously fulfil in all respects her Treaty engagements with each, and so insure the continuance of the friendship which both Powers, even for their own interests, should desire to maintain with her.

Count Brunnow was also told of the communication which had been made to the Persian Government, at which he

expressed his satisfaction, as will be seen from the following extract from a despatch addressed by Earl Granville to Her Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburg on the 10th July, 1873 :—

Earl Granville to Lord A. Loftus.

(Extract.) *Foreign Office, July* 10, 1873.

I ALSO informed Count de Brunnow, as he had broached the subject of the Shah's visit, that the Persians had inquired as to the nature of the engagements which subsisted between Great Britain and Russia as to the integrity of the Persian territory, and that I had told the Grand Vizier that, although no formal Treaty or agreement existed by which the two countries mutually agreed to respect the integrity of Persia, yet that in the year 1834 an understanding was arrived at between the two Governments on the occasion of the nomination of Mahomed Meerza as successor to the Throne of Persia ; that that understanding was based on the sincere desire of the two Governments to maintain, not only the internal tranquillity, but also the independence and integrity of Persia ; that in the year 1838 Count Nesselrode adverted to the agreement entered into by the two Governments as still subsisting in full force, as it was also acknowledged to do by Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and that Her Majesty's Government, as they recognized for themselves the principles which guided the general policy of Great Britain and Russia in favour of the independence and integrity of Persia in the year 1834, had reason to believe, from information which they had received from Lord A. Loftus, Her Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburgh, that the Russian Government referred with satisfaction to the mutual assurances which were made on this subject in 1834 and in 1838; and that Her Majesty's Government considered that the best mode of confirming both Powers in those sentiments was that Persia, while steadily maintaining her rights as an independent Power, should studiously fulfil in all respects her Treaty engagements with each, and so insure the continuance of the friendship which both Powers, even for their own interests, should desire to maintain with her.

Count de Brunnow expressed satisfaction.

On the 23rd December, 1874, M. de Westmann, the Russian Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, again assured Her Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburg that he fully admitted the existence, at that time, of the understanding arrived at in 1834 and 1838.

The engagements entered into between Great Britain and Russia to respect and promote the integrity and independence of Persia were renewed and confirmed in 1888 by an exchange of Notes, from which the following are extracts:—

The Marquis of Salisbury to Sir R. Morier.

(Extract.) *Foreign Office, February* 21, 1888.

I HAVE noticed in the extracts from the Russian press which you have forwarded to this Office that there is a tendency to attach importance to Sir H. Drummond Wolff's appointment as Her Majesty's Minister at Tehran, and to look upon it as evidence of an endeavour on the part of Her Majesty's Government to obtain predominant influence in Persia, to the detriment of Russia.

. . . . . .

He [Sir H. Wolff] will be authorised to give the Shah the strongest assurances of the continued desire of Her Majesty's Government to respect and promote the integrity and independence of Persia, and it would be satisfactory if he could be enabled to state that Her Majesty's Government had ascertained, by an exchange of views with that of Russia, that the agreement arrived at on this subject in 1834 and 1838, and renewed by mutual assurances on several subsequent occasions, remains in full force.

The reply of the Russian Government is recorded in the following despatch:—

The Marquis of Salisbury to Sir R. Morier.

(Extract.) *Foreign Office, March* 12, 1888.

M. DE STAAL called here this afternoon and read to me a despatch from M. de Giers. His Excellency was not authorized to leave a copy of it. The despatch was written in very friendly terms.

After briefly recapitulating the interview which he had with your Excellency, and in which he had stated that he would convey through M. de Staal the definite conclusions of the Russian Government on the several points touched on in the despatch, M. de Giers went on to mention and discuss those points.

In the first place, as regards our desire for an assurance that the engagement between the two Governments to respect and promote the integrity and independence of Persia is considered by the Russian Government as remaining in full force, M. de Giers states that, although, in their opinion, there are no present grounds for apprehending any danger to Persia, and although they have received no communication on the subject from Tehran, yet the Russian Government have no objection to placing again on record that their views on this point are in no way altered. The Persian Government, his Excellency adds, have on more than one occasion had tangible proof of this; and he alludes to a military demonstration made at the request of the Shah in 1880 on the Caucasian frontier, when a portion of the Province of Azerbaïdjan was suffering from the incursions of bands of Kurds. . . .

I have expressed to M. de Staal, and I request your Excellency to offer M. de Giers, my best thanks for this frank and courteous communication of the views of the Russian Government. It has been highly satisfactory to Her Majesty's Government to learn that those views are so much in accordance with their own; and they owe their acknowledgments to M. de Giers for enabling Sir H. D. Wolff to inaugurate his mission by an assurance to the Shah that the engagements between Great Britain and Russia to respect and promote the integrity and independence of the Persian kingdom have again been renewed and confirmed.

ARTICLE XVIII. OF THE COMMERCIAL TREATY BETWEEN GERMANY AND PERSIA. SIGNED AT BERLIN ON JUNE 6TH, 1873, BY PRINCE BISMARCK AND MIRZA HUSSEIN KHAN.

ARTICLE 18.—En cas de guerre de l'une des puissances contractantes avec une autre puissance, il ne sera porté, pour cette seule cause, atteinte, préjudice ou altération à la bonne intelligence et à l'amitié sincère qui doivent exister à jamais entre les hautes parties contractantes. Pour le cas où la Perse serait impliquée dans un différend avec une autre puissance, le gouvernement impérial allemand se déclare prêt à employer, sur la demande du gouvernement de S. M. I. le Shah, ses bons offices pour contribuer à aplanir le différend.

RUSSO-PERSIAN TRADE STATISTICS. TABLE SHOWING GRADUAL INCREASE OF RUSSO-PERSIAN TRADE DURING THE LAST TWENTY YEARS, TOGETHER WITH AVERAGES FOR EACH DECADE.

	Russian exports to Persia.	*Russian imports from Persia.*
Year.	Roubles.	Roubles.
1890	10,900,000	10,800,000
1891	10,000,000	9,800,000
1892	9,300,000	11,300,000
1893	11,900,000	13,900,000
1894	12,200,000	11,300,000
Average: 1890-1894	*10,900,000*	*11,400,000*
1895	14,200,000	19,000,000
1896	14,500,000	17,500,000
1897	16,000,000	18,600,000
1898	17,000,000	21,600,000
1899	17,900,000	21,700,000
Average: 1895-1899	*15,900,000*	*19,700,000*
1900	20,600,000	20,400,000

The average value of the Russian paper rouble in 1890 was 2*s.* 4*d.* It fell in 1891 to 2*s.* 1*d.*, and in 1892 to 2*s.* It rose again in 1893 to 2*s.* 1*d.*, and since M. Witte took the first steps to establish a gold currency in 1894 it has varied very little. In official calculations 9.47 roubles are now taken regularly as equal to the pound sterling.

The following tables of Russian trade with Persia in 1900 have been compiled from the best available sources. No later statistics giving details of imports and exports have yet been published.

Russian exports to Persia.

	Roubles.
Wheat	89,000
Barley	81,000
Wheaten flour	1,064,000
Salt, refined	51,000
Sugar	8,784,000
Tea	477,000
Vodka	30,000
Hemp yarn	10,000
Raw silk	19,000
Silk yarn	25,000
Cotton yarn	8,000
Iron	201,000
Steel	41,000
Crude naphtha	56,000
Kerosene	485,000
Naphtha residue	23,000
Colours and colouring matters	31,000
Horses	62,000
China	30,000
Pottery	176,000
Glassware	408,000
Mirrors	11,000
Tinsel wares	39,000
Copper ,,	156,000
Iron ,,	213,000
Steel ,,	6,000
Wooden ,,	92,000
Paper	95,000
Ropes and cables	27,000
Linen, fine and coarse	190,000
Silk material	43,000
Woollen ,,	20,000
Cloth	41,000
Cotton fabrics	5,275,000
Stearine candles	107,000
Matches	82,000
Rbs.	20,649,000

Russian imports from Persia.

	Roubles.
Grain	119,000
Wheat	53,000
Rice	1,480,000
Fresh fruits	30,000
Oranges and lemons	128,000
Black plums	29,000
Dried fruits	4,045,000
Nuts	1,601,000
Cut tobacco	26,000
Hydromel (mead)	40,000
Butter	27,000
Pickled fish and caviare	299,000
Salt fish	666,000
Domestic cattle	313,000
Hides, leather, and skins	1,382,000
Timber	347,000
Peat and charcoal	114,000
Colours and colouring matters	182,000
Cotton, raw	4,592,000
Silk, raw, and cocoons	59,000
Wool, uncombed	288,000
Cotton yarn	32,000
Cotton fabrics	420,000
Silk stuff and manufactures	792,000
Woollen materials, carpets	903,000
Rbs.	20,413,000

In the original sources all above figures are given in thousands of roubles, so that the adding up of the items does not always agree with the *totals* which are given in full.

It will be noticed that the principal export from Russia to Persia is sugar, which has increased enormously of late years, owing chiefly, of course, to the return of the excise duty (bounty) on exported sugar.

Next come cotton fabrics, upon which the duty paid on the materials used in the manufacture of these goods, namely, on the imported cotton and dyes for prints, is also returned to the exporters at rates from Rs. 4.65 to Rs. 6.40 per pood of 36 lbs. Russia herself grows only about a third of the cotton she requires.

Down to 1880 the overturn of Russo-Persian trade, that is to say, the exports and imports taken together, for many years did not amount to more than five to six million roubles per annum, whereas it now reaches about forty million roubles.

It is interesting to note that, besides the part which English technical skill, employed so largely in the management of nearly all Russian cotton mills, has played in the development of the export of Russian cotton goods to Persia, the largest English woollen and cloth mill in Russia, owned entirely by Englishmen, has now joined with a number of large Russian firms in establishing a wholesale depôt for the sale of their manufactures at Teheran.

Three of the Russian transport companies of St. Petersburg have arranged to co-operate in establishing agencies at the Persian ports and in the towns of the interior—at New Ardebin, Urmi, Morag, Teheran, Resht, Astara, Djulfa, and Tabriz.

The chief Russo-Persian trade routes are—

Trans-Caucasus: Shahtakhta-Djulfa-Tabriz.
Caspian: Astara-Ardebil-Tabriz.
,, Enzeli-Resht-Teheran.
Trans-Caspian: Ashkabad-Dushak-Meshed-Subsivar.

Last year (1902) the new Russian road to Teheran from Resht on the Caspian was used to the extent of *3,948,000 poods* of exports to Persia and *2,641,000 poods* of imports from Persia (*63,677 tons* and *42,612 tons* respectively). The value of these goods is unfortunately not given.

AFGHANISTAN

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE AMEER OF AFGHANISTAN (1880-1883).

Under instructions addressed to Lieut.-General Sir Donald Stewart, Commanding the forces in Northern and Eastern Afghanistan, by the Viceroy of India in Council (Lord Ripon) on July 20th, 1880, Mr. (afterwards Sir Lepel) Griffin communicated the following message to the Ameer Abdurrahman Khan on his recognition by the Afghan Sirdars at Kabul:—(After compliments.)

I am commanded to convey to you the replies of the Government of India to the questions you have asked. *Firstly*, with regard to the position of the ruler of Kabul in relation to foreign powers. Since the British Government admit no right of interference by foreign powers in Afghanistan, and since both Russia and Persia are pledged to abstain from all political interference with Afghan affairs, it is plain that the Kabul ruler can have no political relations with any foreign power except the English; and if any such foreign power should attempt to interfere in Afghanistan, and if such interference should lead to unprovoked aggression on the Kabul ruler, then the British Government will be prepared to aid him, if necessary, to repel it, provided that he follows the advice of the British Government in regard to his external relations.

Secondly, with regard to limits of territory, I am directed to say that the whole province of Kandahar has been placed under a separate ruler, except Pishin and Sibi, which are retained in British possession. Consequently, the Government is not able to enter into any negotiations with you on these points, nor in respect to arrangements with regard

to the north-west frontier, which were concluded with the ex-Amir Mahomed Yakub Khan. With these reservations the British Government are willing that you should establish over Afghanistan (including Herat, the possession of which cannot be guaranteed to you, though Government are not disposed to hinder measures which you may take to obtain possession of it) as complete and extensive authority as has hitherto been exercised by any Amir of your family. The British Government desires to exercise no interference in the internal affairs of these territories, nor will you be required to admit an English Resident anywhere; although, for convenience of ordinary and friendly intercourse between two adjoining states, it may be advisable to station by agreement a Mahomedan agent of the British Government at Kabul.

The following correspondence took place in 1883 between the Viceroy of India (Lord Ripon) and the Ameer Abdurrahman:—

The Viceroy of India to the Ameer of Afghanistan.

(After compliments.) *Simla, June* 16, 1883.

Your Highness will remember that, at Sir Lepel Griffin's interview with you at Zimma on the 31st July, 1880, he said that the Government of India could only start your Administration by giving you a grant to pay your army and officials and your immediate expenses; and that, having recognized you as Ameer, it was anxious to see you strong; but after you had taken possession of Cabul, you must rely on your own resources.

I have always interested myself so much in your Highness' success, and have felt so great a desire for the establishment of a strong and friendly Power under your Highness' auspices in Afghanistan, that I have on various occasions gone beyond the determination then communicated to you, and have from time to time aided your Highness with sums of money and arms, besides devoting some lakhs a-year to the support of Afghan refugees and detenus, whose presence in Afghanistan is, I understand, regarded by your Highness as dangerous to your power. Still my view of the relations to each other of the two countries has throughout been that, in matters of internal policy and finance, India should not seek to interfere

with Afghanistan, but should confine herself to the part of a friendly neighbour and ally. On these conditions, it would be in accordance with the practice of nations that Afghanistan should regulate her own finance and bear her own burdens, as she has always done heretofore.

[As regards matters of external policy, your Highness was informed in the communication from the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, dated the 20th July, 1880, and again in my letter of the 22nd February, 1883, that if any foreign Power should attempt to interfere in Afghanistan, and if such interference should lead to unprovoked aggression on the dominions of your Highness, in that event the British Government would be prepared to aid you to such extent and in such manner as might appear to the British Government necessary in repelling it; provided that your Highness follows unreservedly the advice of the British Government in regard to your external relations.]

On consideration, however, of your accounts of the condition of your north-west frontier, I have been satisfied that your Highness has to contend with exceptional difficulties in that quarter. I have understood that, owing to various untoward circumstances, your Highness has not yet been able to reduce the important frontier province of Herat to the orderly and secure condition so essential for the protection of Afghanistan as a whole; and therefore that, for the settlement of the affairs of that frontier, some friendly assistance may be needful to you. I further observe, with satisfaction, your Highness' assurances of good faith and loyalty to the British Government; and your Highness' language convinces me that you realize how much it is to the interest of Afghanistan to maintain friendly relations with the Government of India.

Impressed by these considerations, I have determined to offer to your Highness personally, as an aid towards meeting the present difficulties in the management of your State, a subsidy of 12 lakhs of rupees a-year, payable monthly, to be devoted to the payment of your troops, and to the other measures required for the defence of your north-western frontier. I feel that I may safely trust to your Highness' good faith and practised skill to devote this addition to your resources to objects of such vital importance as those which I have above mentioned.

The Ameer of Afghanistan to the Viceroy of India.

(Translation.) (Extract).

(After compliments.) *6th Ramasan*, 1300 *H.* (*July* 11th, 1883).

I have announced the glad tidings of your Excellency's determination, which is calculated to conduce to the well-being of the British Government and of the people of Afghanistan, and to put in order and keep going my affairs to the people of Afghanistan at large, who all offered up thanks, saying: "For many years we, the Afghan nation, have been suffering from innumerable calamities. Thanks be to God that a glorious Government like this (British Government) has befriended us."

(God willing, the people of Afghanistan will never allow their heads to swerve from the line of friendship to the illustrious British Government, and so long as I live I will not think of making friends with any one but with the illustrious British Government.) I have offered my prayers to God for the (increased) glory of that powerful Government.

THE AMEER'S SPEECH AT THE RAWAL PINDI DURBAR.

In 1885 the Ameer and Lord Dufferin met at Rawal Pindi, when the Viceroy again confirmed all the assurances previously given to the Ameer. At the great Durbar held on April 8th the Ameer Abdurrahman spoke as follows:—

("In return for this kindness and favour, I am ready with my arms and people to render any services that may be required of me or of the Afghan nation. As the British Government has declared that it will assist me in repelling any foreign enemy, so it is right and proper that Afghanistan should unite in the firmest manner and stand side by side with the British Government.")

AGREEMENT between His Highness AMIR ABDUR RAHMAN KHAN, G.C.S.I., Amir of Afghanistan and its Dependencies, on the one part, and Sir HENRY MORTIMER DURAND, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, representing the Government of India, on the other part.

Whereas certain questions have arisen regarding the frontier of Afghanistan on the side of India, and whereas both his Highness the Amir and the Government of India are desirous of settling these questions by a friendly understanding, and of fixing the limit of their respective spheres of influence, so that for the future there may be no difference of opinion on the subject between the allied Governments, it is hereby agreed as follows:—

(1.) The eastern and southern frontier of his Highness's dominions, from Wakhan to the Persian border, shall follow the line shown in the map attached to this agreement.

(2.) The Government of India will at no time exercise interference in the territories lying beyond this line on the side of Afghanistan, and his Highness the Amir will at no time exercise interference in the territories lying beyond this line on the side of India.

(3.) The British Government thus agrees to his Highness the Amir retaining Asmar and the valley above it, as far as Chanak. His Highness agrees, on the other hand, that he will at no time exercise interference in Swat, Bajaur, or Chitral, including the Arnawai or Bashgal valley. The British Government also agrees to leave to his Highness the Birmal tract as shown in the detailed map already given to his Highness, who relinquishes his claim to the rest of the Waziri country and Dawar. His Highness also relinquishes his claim to Chageh.

(4.) The frontier line will hereafter be laid down in detail and demarcated, wherever this may be practicable and desirable, by Joint British and Afghan Commissioners, whose object will be to arrive by mutual understanding at a boundary which shall adhere with the greatest possible exactness to the line shown in the map attached to this agreement, having due regard to the existing local rights of villages adjoining the frontier.

(5.) With reference to the question of Chaman, the Amir withdraws his objection to the new British Cantonment and concedes to the British Government the rights purchased by him in the Sirkai Tilerai water. At this part of the frontier the line will be drawn as follows:—

From the crest of the Khwaja Amran range near the Psha Kotal, which remains in British territory, the line will run in such a direction as to leave Murgha Chaman and the Sharobo spring to Afghanistan, and to pass half-way between the New Chaman Fort and the Afghan outpost known locally as Lashkar Dand. The line will then pass half-way between the railway station and the hill known as the Mian Baldak, and, turning southwards, will rejoin the Khwaja Amran range, leaving the Gwasha Post in British territory, and the road to Shorawak to the west and south of Gwasha in Afghanistan. The British Government will not exercise any interference within half a mile of the road.

(6.) The above articles of agreement are regarded by the Government of India and his Highness the Amir of Afghanistan as a full and satisfactory settlement of all the principal differences of opinion which have arisen between them in regard to the frontier; and both the Government of India and his Highness the Amir undertake that any differences of detail, such as those which will have to be considered hereafter by the officers appointed to demarcate the boundary line, shall be settled in a friendly spirit, so as to remove for the future as far as possible all causes of doubt and misunderstanding between the two Governments.

(7.) Being fully satisfied of his Highness's goodwill to the British Government, and wishing to see Afghanistan independent and strong, the Government of India will raise no objection to the purchase and import by his Highness of munitions of war, and they will themselves grant him some help in this respect. Further, in order to mark their sense of the friendly spirit in which his Highness the Amir has entered into these negotiations, the Government of India undertake to increase by the sum of six lakhs of rupees a year the subsidy of 12 lakhs now granted to his Highness.

H. M. DURAND.

AMIR ABDUR RAHMAN KHAN.

Kabul, November 12, 1893.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND RUSSIAN GOVERNMENTS RESPECTING THE EXCLUSION OF AFGHANISTAN FROM THE RUSSIAN SPHERE OF INFLUENCE.

In view of the successive steps by which Russia has during the last half-century reduced the area of those "intermediate regions separating the British and Russian possessions in Central Asia," of which Count Nesselrode in 1838 affirmed the necessity of preserving the tranquillity and maintaining the independence "in order to prevent the possibility of a conflict between two great Powers, who, to remain friends, must avoid friction or collision in the heart of Asia," the British Government has from time to time elicited from the Russian Government a series of assurances that the latter, whatever its action in other respects may have been, regards Afghanistan as entirely beyond its sphere of action.

In March, 1869, the Earl of Clarendon, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, informed the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg that having lately, and on more than one occasion, spoken to Baron Brunnow respecting Central Asia and the rapid advance of Russian troops, he had received communication of a despatch addressed by the Russian Chancellor, Prince Gortchakoff, to the Russian Ambassador in London, containing the following declaration:—

"You may repeat to Her Britannic Majesty's Principal Secretary of State the positive assurance that His Imperial Majesty looks upon Afghanistan as completely outside the sphere within which Russia may be called upon to exercise her influence. No intervention or interference whatever, opposed to the independence of that State, enters into his intentions."

In November of the same year Prince Gortchakoff informed the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, with respect to the inexpediency of either English or Russian officers going to Afghanistan, that he saw no objection whatever to English

officers visiting Kabul, though he agreed with Lord Mayo that Russian agents should not do so.

In 1874, after the annexation of Khiva to the Russian dominions, Earl Granville wrote on January 7th as follows, to Her Majesty's Ambassador in St. Petersburg, summing up the previous correspondence which had passed between the two Governments :—

Earl Granville to Lord A. Loftus.

(Extract.) *Foreign Office, Jan.* 7, 1874.

Her Majesty's Government see no practical advantage in examining too minutely how far these arrangements [between the Russian Government and the Khan of Khiva] are in strict accordance with the assurances given to me in January last by Count Schouvalow as to the intentions with which the expedition against Khiva was undertaken. They are not disposed to share in the exaggerated apprehensions which have at times been expressed in this country as to the danger to British rule in India which may arise from the extension of Russian influence in Central Asia.

At the same time each step of that progress renders it more desirable that a clear and frank understanding should continue to exist between the two countries as to the relative position of British and Russian interests in Asia, and it is with that object that Her Majesty's Government think it right on the present occasion to review the communications which have passed on the subject, and the position of affairs as they stand in respect of the future. In so doing they are fulfilling the wish expressed by Prince Gortchakow, in conversation with Sir A. Buchanan, on the 2nd of November, 1869, when he begged that Lord Clarendon might be told that, "as both Governments are free from all *arrière-pensées*, ambitious views, or unfriendly feelings towards each other, the more fully and frankly all questions connected with Central Asia are discussed between them, the more effectually will the 'mists' be blown away which, through the misrepresentations of over-zealous subordinate agents, may at any time hang over them."

In the spring of 1869 Lord Clarendon, in several conversations with Baron Brunnow, drew attention to the rapid progress of the Russian troops in Central Asia, and made

a proposal for the "recognition of some territory as neutral between the possessions of England and Russia, which should be the limit of those possessions, and which should be scrupulously respected by both Powers."

Prince Gortchakow, to whom Baron Brunnow had communicated Lord Clarendon's suggestions, replied that "the idea of maintaining between the possessions of the two Empires in Asia a zone to preserve them from any contact" had always been shared by the Emperor, and he authorized Baron Brunnow to "repeat to Her Britannic Majesty's Principal Secretary of State the positive assurance that His Imperial Majesty looks upon Afghanistan as completely outside the sphere within which Russia may be called upon to exercise her influence. No intervention or interference whatever, opposed to the independence of that State, enters into his intentions."

Her Majesty's Government gladly take this opportunity of again acknowledging the friendly and conciliatory spirit shown by the Imperial Government in the acceptance by them of the views advanced on the part of Great Britain, as to the frontier line of Afghanistan. Those views were stated, as you are aware, in my despatch to your Excellency of October 17, 1872, and the assent of the Imperial Government to the definition of the Afghan frontier as therein laid down, will be found in Prince Gortchakow's despatches to Baron Brunnow, of December 7, 1872, and January 19, 1873.

Such was the agreement arrived at between the two countries. On their part, Her Majesty's Government may fairly claim that it has been faithfully executed to the full extent of their power.

It is unnecessary to retrace the series of circumstances which, in spite of the reluctance of the Russian Government, led to the recent expedition against Khiva. In the face of these events it would be unwise not to contemplate the possibility that considerations of self-defence, or the necessity of punishing acts of plunder and hostility, may eventually give occasion for a Russian expedition against the Turkoman tribes.

In face of the agreement which exists between the two countries, it is unnecessary for Her Majesty's Government to make any profession of their conviction that Afghanistan is perfectly secure from any hostile designs on the part of

Russia. They think it best, however, to bring the fears entertained by the Ameer to the knowledge of the Russian Government, and to express their earnest hope that the question of any further expedition against the Turkoman tribes may be carefully considered, in conjunction with the results which the Ameer of Cabul apprehends may ensue from it. They think it right to state candidly and at once that the independence of Afghanistan is regarded by them as a matter of great importance to the welfare and security of British India and to the tranquillity of Asia.

Prince Gortchakoff replied on January 21st, 1874, to his Ambassador in London :—

Prince Gortchakow to Count Brunnow (communicated to Earl Granville by Count Brunnow, Feb. 17).

(Extract.) *St. Petersburg, Jan.* 21.

I have expressed to the British Ambassador the entire satisfaction which we feel at the just view taken by Her Majesty's Government with regard to the questions which we are called upon to treat together in Asia.

In my opinion the understanding is complete. It rests not only upon the loyalty of the two Governments, but upon mutual political advantages which are palpably evident. So long as they shall be animated by a spirit of mutual goodwill and conciliation, no political misunderstanding is to be apprehended between them.

For our part, we remain constantly faithful to the programme traced by mutual agreement, as resulted from my interviews with Lord Clarendon and as developed and defined by the communications between the two Cabinets.

I have repeated to Lord A. Loftus the positive assurance that the Imperial Cabinet continues to consider Afghanistan as entirely beyond its sphere of action.

If on either side the two Governments exercise their ascendency over the States placed within the range of their natural influence in order to deter them from all aggression, there is reason to hope that no violent collision will occur to disturb the repose of Central Asia and interfere with the work of civilisation which it is the duty and the interest of the two great Empires to bring to a favourable issue.

Be good enough to communicate these observations to

Lord Granville, and to repeat to his Excellency our conviction that the two Governments have an equal interest in not allowing their good relations to be disturbed by the intrigues of Asiatic Khans, and that so long as they both act together with a feeling of mutual confidence and goodwill, the tranquillity of Central Asia will be sufficiently guaranteed against all eventualities.

On January 28th, 1874, the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg reported to Lord Granville a further assurance given to him by the Russian Chancellor :—

Lord A. Loftus to Earl Granville.

(Extract.) *St. Petersburg, Jan.* 19, 1874.

'As regards Afghanistan, his Highness repeated to me that the Imperial Government considered that kingdom to be beyond the sphere of their political action, and that, happen what might, in the internal state of that country the Imperial Government would not interfere.'

In 1876, after the occupation of Khokand by the Russians, Prince Gortchakoff instructed the Russian Ambassador to communicate the following despatch to Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs :—

Prince Gortchakow to Count Schuvaloff (communicated to the Earl of Derby by Count Schuvaloff, Feb. 25, 1876).

(Extract.) *St. Petersburgh, February* $\frac{8}{17}$, 1876.

HIS Majesty the Emperor has learned with much interest the contents of the Memorandum accompanying a despatch from Lord Derby, which Lord A. Loftus read, in my absence, to the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs.

I inclose herewith a copy of this document, which is a reply to the Memorandum dated the 11th May, 1875, which your Excellency was instructed to communicate to the Principal Secretary of State of Her Britannic Majesty regarding the relations of the two Governments in Central Asia.

Our august Master has learnt with satisfaction the friendly desire, therein expressed, to prevent, by frank explanations, any cause of misunderstanding between the two Cabinets.

His Majesty appreciates likewise the breadth of view with which Lord Derby puts on one side discussions of detail and restrictions which are inapplicable in view of the ill-defined condition of the countries over which the two Governments have to exercise their influence.

(Have the goodness to inform his Excellency, by order of our august Master, that we entirely agree in the conclusion that, while maintaining, on either side, the arrangement come to as regards the limits of Afghanistan, which is to remain outside the sphere of Russian action, the two Cabinets should regard as terminated the discussions relative to the intermediate zone, which have been recognized as unpractical; that, while retaining entire freedom of action, they should be guided by a mutual desire to pay due regard to their respective interests and necessities, by avoiding, as far as possible, any immediate contact with each other, and any collisions betweeen the Asiatic States placed within the circle of their influence.)

We are convinced that by keeping to this principle, and cultivating feelings of equity and reciprocal goodwill, the two Cabinets will succeed in consolidating the friendly relations so happily established between them, for the advantage of the general peace in Europe and Asia.

Your Excellency can renew to Lord Derby the assurance that he may reckon on our frank co-operation for this purpose.

The attention of the Russian Government having been called at the end of the same year to the correspondence exchanged between General Kaufmann and the Ameer of Kabul, the British Ambassador was able to transmit the following further assurance from the Russian Government :—

M. de Giers to Lord A. Loftus.

St. Petersburg, $\frac{\text{February } 21}{\text{March } 5}$, 1877.

The Imperial Government entirely share the opinion of the British Government that a frank and cordial interchange of opinions on the question of Central Asia cannot do otherwise than contribute to the maintenance of the good and friendly relations at present established between Russia and England.

(With this view they felt ready to give, in the Notes of the $\frac{19\text{th November}}{\text{December 1st}}$ and the $\frac{3\text{rd}}{15\text{th}}$ December, to which your Excellency refers, the assurance that Russia had not endeavoured to conclude any arrangement, commercial or political, with the Ameer of Cabul, and that the rare relations of our authorities in Central Asia with the latter had never borne any other character than that of pure courtesy, in conformity with local usages in the East.) While now renewing these assurances, the Imperial Government hope the British Government will recognize that practically we have never swerved from them, whatever may have been the erroneous interpretations placed by the native Asiatic Governments on the communications of General Kaufmann, and whatever false importance may have been attributed to the method of transmission adopted by him. Misunderstandings on this subject were nearly inevitable, considering the uncertain character of the native populations of Central Asia, and their inveterate inclination to intrigue; the only effective way, in our opinion, of meeting this danger, lies in the good faith and loyalty which, we are glad to think, will never cease to influence, on either side, any interchange of views between us and the British Cabinet.

A Russian Mission, under General Stolietoff, having been nevertheless sent to Kabul at the time of the Russo-Turkish War, when the relations between Great Britain and Russia were seriously strained, the Russian Government undertook to withdraw it after the Congress of Berlin had removed all danger of war. The following Notes were exchanged between the Russian Ambassador in London and Lord Salisbury before General Stolietoff's final recall from Kabul:—

Count Schuvaloff to the Marquis of Salisbury.

London, December $\frac{7}{19}$, 1878.

YOU have expressed surprise on learning that the Russian Mission, which you thought had left Cabul, was still there. You reminded me of the declaration made by M. de Giers to the British Chargé d'Affaires concerning the provisional character of this Mission, which was despatched under exceptional circumstances, and at a time when it was to be feared that war might break out between England and Russia.

I have received a telegram from Prince Gortchacow, in which he charges me to ask you whether the arrangements between Russia and England, such as they existed before the despatch of the Mission, and such as they are recorded in the correspondence exchanged on this subject between the two Cabinets, are maintained by Her Majesty's Government, and whether they retain in their eyes their obligatory character.

His Majesty the Emperor is disposed, on his part, to observe all the arrangements relative to Central Asia concluded between Russia and England, and to recall immediately the Mission which is at Cabul.

The Marquis of Salisbury to Count Schuvaloff.

Foreign Office, December 19, 1878.

IN reply to your letter of this day's date, I have to state to your Excellency that the continued presence of the Russian Mission at Cabul is the sole obstacle to a full revival of the understanding between the two Powers expressed in the correspondence which has passed between them upon the subject of Afghanistan and Central Asia; and when the Russian Mission is withdrawn, Her Majesty's Government will consider that all engagements on both sides with respect to those countries retain their obligatory character.

In 1882 the position of the two countries in Asia was again discussed in connection with the Russian advance to Merv, and Lord Granville addressed on February 22nd the following despatch to the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg :—

Earl Granville to Sir E. Thornton.

Foreign Office, February 22, 1882.

THE Russian Ambassador called upon me this afternoon by appointment. His Excellency told me that he had reported to his Government the substance of the conversation we had had on the 2nd instant on the policy of the two Governments in Asia, as reported in my despatch of that date.

Prince Lobanow said that he had told his Government that I had commenced by stating that the present good relations between Russia and England offered an opportunity, of which it was desirable to take advantage, for coming to some

further understanding as to the position of the two countries in Central Asia; that he had thereupon suggested a renewal of the agreement formerly made with Prince Gortchacow by Lord Clarendon and me; that to this I had replied that I looked upon that agreement as still existing in full force, but that it left certain matters undecided which it would be well definitely to settle; and that I had finished by proposing a delimitation of the Persian frontier from Baba-Durmaz to a point in the neighbourhood of the Heri-Rud.

He had now received the reply of his Government. They acknowledged the continued validity of the agreement formerly entered into by Prince Gortchacow, by which Afghanistan was admitted to be beyond the sphere of Russian influence. That agreement was, however, as I had said, incomplete; and they were ready to supplement it by a settlement of the frontier of Afghanistan, from the point where it had been left undefined as far as Sarakhs.

In 1883 the following correspondence took place:—

Earl Granville to Mr. J. G. Kennedy.

Foreign Office, October 2, 1883.

A REPORT has reached Her Majesty's Government of an intended visit of a Russian to Cabul bearing a letter from the Emperor of Russia to the Ameer.

Such a proceeding on the part of the Russian Government would be inconsistent with the assurances which they have given to Her Majesty's Government from time to time on the subject of Afghanistan.

I have to instruct you to inquire as to the truth of this report, and to inform me of the result by telegraph.

Mr. J. G. Kennedy to Earl Granville.

St. Petersburgh, October 3, 1883.

I HAVE the honour to state that on receipt to-day of your Lordship's telegram of the 2nd instant I immediately waited on M. de Giers at the Foreign Department, and inquired of his Excellency whether there was any truth in a report which had reached Her Majesty's Government that a Russian intended to go to Cabul, furnished with a letter to the Ameer from the Emperor.

M. de Giers at once replied that such an event was im-

possible. The Emperor was most unlikely to give any letter addressed to the Ameer to any one. No such letter could be written without M. de Gier's knowledge, and he could positively and solemnly assure me that no such letter had been written by His Imperial Majesty.

M. de Giers further states that so anxious were the Emperor and himself to avoid all suspicion of Russian communication with Afghanistan that strict orders had been sent to the Governor-General of Turkestan to desist from the transmission of letters of ceremony or even of letters of recommendation to the Ameer in favour of travellers. In fact, all possible steps were taken to prevent intercourse between Russia and Afghanistan, which latter country was considered to be in England's "orbit."

In reply to a suggestion of mine, M. de Giers stated that no such letter could have been written during the Moscow Coronation festivities, at which period the Emperor had been most guarded in all his dealings with the various Asiatic potentates there assembled.

M. de Giers also promised to inform me at once whenever any intention existed of such an improbable event as the transmission of a letter from His Imperial Majesty to the Ruler of Afghanistan.

In 1884, in view of inquiries made by the British Government as to the reported despatch of a Russian Agent to Meimeneh, within the frontiers of Afghanistan, M. de Giers communicated on April $\frac{18}{30}$ to the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg a Memorandum on the situation in the Merv region, containing the following passage:—

The Imperial Ministry can, on the other hand, state that no agent has been sent to Meimeneh. According to the terms of the arrangement come to between the two Powers, Meimeneh is included in the country of the Ameer of Afghanistan, and the Government of His Majesty the Emperor is resolved to scrupulously respect, as it has done in times past, all the engagements it contracted in virtue of the arrangement in question.

In 1885 further disquieting reports having arisen with regard to the proceedings of the Russians on the Afghan frontier, the following Memorandum was communicated by

the Russian Foreign Office to the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg :—

THE Imperial Ministry for Foreign Affairs has taken note of the Memorandum which was transmitted by the English Ambassador on the 16th instant, and which contains the expression of the wish of Her Majesty's Government that the agitation raised in the two countries by the rumours about the preparations said to be in progress on both sides should cease.

The same Memorandum states that, unless circumstances arise over which they have no control, and which might bring about sudden changes, the two Governments are in a position which would allow them to arrive at an arrangement satisfactory and honourable for Russia, the Ameer of Afghanistan, and England.

The Imperial Cabinet cannot do less than join in this desire of Her Majesty's Government. They have never cherished, nor do they cherish, aggressive views on Herat or any other part of the Ameer's possessions, and they only aim at contributing to the establishment of peace and security there. Resolved as they are to respect scrupulously the rights of Great Britain, as well as those of the Ameer, the Imperial Cabinet hope that Her Majesty's Government will display the same regard for the rights of Russia, and they are convinced that the two Governments will thus succeed in avoiding everything which might interfere with a satisfactory solution of the question now under negotiation.

St. Petersburgh, March 18, 1885.

In spite of the Penjdeh incident the delimitation of the Russo-Afghan frontier was carried out in complete agreement between the British and Russian Governments in conformity with the assurances contained in the above correspondence.

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENTS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND RUSSIA WITH REGARD TO THE SPHERES OF INFLUENCE OF THE TWO COUNTRIES IN THE REGION OF THE PAMIRS, EMBODIED IN AN EXCHANGE OF NOTES BETWEEN THE EARL OF KIMBERLEY AND M. DE STAAL. (LONDON, MARCH 11TH, 1895.)

As a result of the negotiations which have taken place between our two Governments in regard to the spheres of influence of Great Britain and Russia in the country to the east of Lake Victoria (Zor Koul), the following points have been agreed upon between us :—

1. The spheres of influence of Great Britain and Russia to the east of Lake Victoria (Zor Koul) shall be divided by a line which, starting from a point on that lake near to its eastern extremity, shall follow the crests of the mountain range running somewhat to the south of the latitude of the lake as far as the Bendersky and Orta-Bel Passes.

From thence the line shall run along the same range while it remains to the south of the latitude of the said lake. On reaching that latitude it shall descend a spur of the range towards Kizil Rabat on the Aksu River, if that locality is found not to be north of the latitude of Lake Victoria, and from thence it shall be prolonged in an easterly direction so as to meet the Chinese frontier.

If it should be found that Kizil Rabat is situated to the north of the latitude of Lake Victoria, the line of demarcation shall be drawn to the nearest convenient point on the Aksu River south of that latitude, and from thence prolonged as aforesaid.

2. The line shall be marked out, and its precise configuration shall be settled by a Joint Commission of a purely technical character, with a military escort not exceeding that which is strictly necessary for its proper protection.

The Commission shall be composed of British and Russian Delegates, with the necessary technical assistance.

Her Britannic Majesty's Government will arrange with the Ameer of Afghanistan as to the manner in which His Highness shall be represented on the Commission.

3. The Commission shall also be charged to report any

facts which can be ascertained on the spot bearing on the situation of the Chinese frontier, with a view to enable the two Governments to come to an agreement with the Chinese Government as to the limits of Chinese territory in the vicinity of the line, in such manner as may be found most convenient.

4. Her Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of His Majesty the Emperor of Russia engage to abstain from exercising any political influence or control, the former to the north, the latter to the south, of the above line of demarcation.

5. Her Britannic Majesty's Government engage that the territory lying within the British sphere of influence between the Hindu Kush and the line running from the east end of Lake Victoria to the Chinese frontier shall form part of the territory of the Ameer of Afghanistan, that it shall not be annexed to Great Britain, and that no military posts or forts shall be established in it.

The execution of this Agreement is contingent upon the evacuation by the Ameer of Afghanistan of all the territories now occupied by His Highness on the right bank of the Panjah, and on the evacuation by the Ameer of Bokhara of the portion of Darwaz which lies to the south of the Oxus, in regard to which Her Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of His Majesty the Emperor of Russia have agreed to use their influence respectively with the two Ameers.

TIBET, SIKKIM, BURMAH, SIAM, AND SOUTH-WESTERN CHINA

SEPARATE ARTICLE RELATING TO TIBET OF THE CHEFOO AGREEMENT BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND CHINA, SEPTEMBER 13TH, 1876.

Her Majesty's Government having it in contemplation to send a mission of exploration next year by way of Peking through Kan-Su and Koko-Nor, or by way of Ssu-chuen to Thibet and thence to India, the Tsung-li Yamên, having due regard to the circumstances, will, when the time arrives, issue the necessary passports, and will address letters to the high provincial authorities and to the Resident in Thibet. If the Mission should not be sent by these routes, but should be proceeding across the Indian frontier to Thibet, the Tsung-li Yamên, on receipt of a communication to the above effect from the British Minister, will write to the Chinese Resident in Thibet, and the Resident, with due regard to the circumstances, will send officers to take due charge of the Mission; and passports for the Mission will be issued by the Tsung-li Yamên, that its passage be not obstructed.

(L.S.) THOMAS FRANCIS WADE.
LI HUNG-CHANG.

CONVENTION BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND CHINA RELATIVE TO BURMAH AND TIBET. SIGNED AT PEKING, JULY 24TH, 1886.

ARTICLE 1.—Inasmuch as it has been the practice of Burmah to send Decennial Missions to present articles of local produce, England agrees that the highest authority in Burmah

shall send the customary Decennial Missions, the members of the Missions to be of Burmese race.

ARTICLE 2.—China agrees that in all matters whatsoever appertaining to the authority and rule which England is now exercising in Burmah, England shall be free to do whatever she deems fit and proper.

ARTICLE 3.—The frontier between Burmah and China to be marked by a Delimitation Commission, and the conditions of frontier trade to be settled by a Frontier Trade Convention, both countries agreeing to protect and encourage trade between China and Burmah.

ARTICLE 4.—Inasmuch as inquiry into the circumstances by the Chinese Government has shown the existence of many obstacles to the Mission to Thibet provided for in the Separate Article of the Chefoo Agreement, England consents to countermand the Mission forthwith.

With regard to the desire of the British Government to consider arrangements for frontier trade between India and Thibet, it will be the duty of the Chinese Government, after careful inquiry into the circumstances, to adopt measures to exhort and encourage the people with a view to the promotion and development of trade. Should it be practicable, the Chinese Government shall then proceed carefully to consider Trade Regulations; but if insuperable obstacles should be found to exist, the British Government will not press the matter unduly.

(L.S.) N. R. O'CONOR.
CHING.
SUN YU WEN.

CONVENTION BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND CHINA RELATING TO SIKKIM AND TIBET. SIGNED AT CALCUTTA, MARCH 17TH, 1890, BY THE MARQUESS OF LANSDOWNE, VICEROY OF INDIA, AND THE CHINESE RESIDENT AT LHASA.

ARTICLE 1.—The boundary of Sikkim and Tibet shall be the crest of the mountain range separating the waters flowing into the Sikkim Teesta and its affluents from the waters flowing into the Tibetan Moch[illegible] into other

rivers of Tibet. The line commences at Mount Gipmochi on the Bhutan frontier and follows the above-mentioned water-parting to the point where it meets the Nepal territory.

ARTICLE II.—It is admitted that the British Government, whose protectorate over the Sikkim State is hereby recognised, has direct and exclusive control over the internal administration and foreign relations of that State, and except through and with the permission of the British Government neither the Ruler of the State nor any of its officers shall have official relations of any kind, formal or informal, with any other country.

ARTICLE III.—The Government of Great Britain and Ireland and the Government of China engage reciprocally to respect the boundary as defined in Article I. and to prevent acts of aggression from their respective sides of the frontier.

ARTICLE IV.—The question of providing increased facilities for trade across the Sikkim-Tibet frontier will hereafter be discussed with a view to a mutually satisfactory arrangement by the High Contracting Parties.

ARTICLE V.—The question of pasturage on the Sikkim side of the frontier is reserved for further examination and future adjustment.

ARTICLE VI.—The High Contracting Parties reserve for discussion and arrangement the method in which official communications between the British authorities in India and the authorities in Tibet shall be conducted.

ARTICLE VII.—Two joint Commissioners shall within six months from the ratification of this Convention be appointed, one by the British Government in India, the other by the Chinese Resident in Tibet. The said Commissioners shall meet and discuss the questions which by the last three preceding articles have been reserved.

ARTICLE VIII.—The present Convention shall be ratified, and the ratifications shall be exchanged in London as soon as possible after the date of signature thereof.

The Regulations above referred to were drawn up and signed at Darjeeling by British and Chinese Commissioners on December 5th, 1893. They provided for the establishment

of a trade mart at Yatung, on the Tibetan side of the frontier, to which British subjects were to have free access with the right to rent houses and godowns. The Chinese Government undertook to provide suitable buildings for the purpose, as well as a special residence for the officer or officers appointed by the British Government to reside at Yatung to watch the conditions of British trade. Special provisions were made with regard to the importation and exportation of goods and the taxes leviable thereupon. Trade disputes were to be settled by personal conference between the Political Officer for Sikkim and the Chinese Frontier Officer. Provision was also made for the forwarding of official communications between Chinese and Indian officials. In the event of disagreement between the local officials on both sides, the matter was to be reported to their superiors, and ultimately to their respective Governments for settlement. After the lapse of five years the regulations were to be subject to revision by Commissioners appointed on both sides for the purpose.

CONVENTION BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND CHINA, GIVING EFFECT TO ARTICLE III. OF THE CONVENTION OF JULY 24TH, 1886, RELATIVE TO BURMAH AND THIBET. SIGNED AT LONDON, MARCH 1ST, 1894.

The first three articles define the frontier line between Burmah and China up to 25° 35′ Northern latitude, beyond which it is reserved for a future understanding.

The most important of the other articles run as follows:—

ARTICLE V.—In addition to the territorial concessions in Northern Theinni, and the cession to China of the State of Kokang, which result from the frontier as above described, Her Britannic Majesty, in consideration of the abandonment of the claims advanced by China to the territory lying outside and abutting on the frontier of the Prefecture of Yung Chang and Sub-Prefecture of Teng Yüeh, agrees to renounce in favour of His Majesty the Emperor of China, and of his heirs and successors for ever, all the suzerain rights in and

over the States of Munglem and Kiang Hung formerly possessed by the Kings of Ava concurrently with the Emperors of China. These and all other rights in the said States, with the titles, prerogatives, and privileges thereto pertaining, Her Majesty the Queen-Empress renounces as aforesaid, with the sole proviso that His Majesty the Emperor of China shall not, without previously coming to an agreement with Her Britannic Majesty, cede either Munglem or Kiang Hung, or any portion thereof, to any other nation.

ARTICLE VII.—It is agreed that any posts belonging to either country which may be stationed within the territory of the other when the Commission of Delimitation shall have brought its labours to a conclusion shall, within eight months from the date of such conclusion, be withdrawn, and their places occupied by the troops of the other, mutual notice having in the meantime been given of the precise date at which the withdrawal and occupation will take place. From the date of such occupation the High Contracting Parties shall each within its own territories hold itself responsible for the maintenance of good order, and for the tranquillity of the tribes inhabiting them.

The High Contracting Parties further engage neither to construct nor to maintain within 10 English miles from the nearest point of the common frontier, measured in a straight line and horizontal projection, any fortifications or permanent camps, beyond such posts as are necessary for preserving peace and good order in the frontier districts.

ARTICLE VIII.—Subject to the conditions mentioned hereafter in Articles X. and XI., the British Government, wishing to encourage and develop the land trade of China with Burmah as much as possible, consent, for a period of six years from the ratification of the present Convention, to allow Chinese produce and manufactures, with the exception of salt, to enter Burmah by land duty free, and to allow British manufactures and Burmese produce, with the exception of rice, to be exported to China by land free of duty.

The duties on salt and rice so imported and exported shall not be higher than those imposed on their import or export by sea.

ARTICLE IX.—With a view to the development of trade between China and Burmah, the Chinese Government consent

that for six years from the ratification of the present Convention the duties levied on goods imported into China by these routes shall be those specified in the General Tariff of the Maritime Customs diminished by three-tenths, and that the duties on goods exported from China by the same route shall be those specified in the same Tariff diminished by four-tenths. Transit passes for imports and exports shall be granted in accordance with the Rules in force at the Treaty ports.

ARTICLE XII.—The British Government, wishing to promote frontier trade between the two countries by encouraging mining enterprise in Yünnan and in the new territorial acquisitions of China referred to in the present Convention, consent to allow Chinese vessels carrying merchandise, ores, and minerals of all kinds, and coming from or destined for China, freely to navigate the Irrawaddy on the same conditions as to dues and other matters as British vessels.

ARTICLE XIII.—It is agreed that His Majesty the Emperor of China may appoint a Consul in Burmah, to reside at Rangoon; and that Her Britannic Majesty may appoint a Consul to reside at Manwyne; and that the Consuls of the two Governments shall each within the territories of the other enjoy the same privileges and immunities as the Consuls of the most favoured nation.

Further, that, in proportion as the commerce between Burmah and China increases, additional Consuls may be appointed by mutual agreement, to reside at such places in Burmah and Yünnan as the requirements of the trade may seem to demand.

ARTICLE XVI.—With a view to improving the intercourse between the two countries, and placing the Chinese Consul at Rangoon in communication with the High Provincial Authorities in Yünnan, the High Contracting Parties undertake to connect the telegraphic systems of the two countries with each other as soon as the necessary arrangements can be made; the line will, however, at first only be used for the transmission of official telegrams and of general messages for and from Burmah and the Province of Yünnan.

ARTICLE XVII.—It is agreed that subjects of the two Powers shall each within the territories of the other enjoy all the privileges, immunities, and advantages that may have

been, or may hereafter be, accorded to the subjects of any other nation.

ARTICLE XVIII.—It is agreed that the commercial stipulations contained in the present Convention being of a special nature and the result of mutual concessions, consented to with a view to adapting them to local conditions and the peculiar necessities of the Burmah-China overland trade, the advantages accruing from them shall not be invoked by the subjects of either Power residing at other places where the two Empires are conterminous, excepting where the same conditions prevail, and then only in return for similar concessions.

ARTICLE XIX.—The arrangements with regard to trade and commerce contained in the present Convention being of a provisional and experimental character, it is agreed that should subsequent experience of their working, or a more intimate knowledge than is now possessed of the requirements of the trade, seem to require it, they may be revised at the demand of either party after a lapse of six years after the exchange of ratifications of the present Convention, or sooner should the two Governments desire it.

Declaration.

On proceeding to the signature this day of the Convention between China and Great Britain, giving effect to Article III. of the Convention relative to Burmah and Thibet, signed at Peking on the 24th July, 1886:

The undersigned Plenipotentiaries declare that, inasmuch as the present Convention has been concluded for the special purpose mentioned in the preamble thereof, the stipulations contained therein are applicable only to those parts of the dominions of His Majesty the Emperor of China and of Her Britannic Majesty to which the said Convention expressly relates, and are not to be construed as applicable elsewhere.

Done at London the 1st day of March, 1894.

(L.S.) SIEH.
(L.S.) ROSEBERY.

ARTICLES RELATING TO SIAM, THE MEKONG VALLEY, AND YUNNAN AND SZECHUEN IN THE DECLARATION BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND FRANCE. SIGNED AT LONDON, JANUARY 15TH, 1896, BY THE MARQUESS OF SALISBURY AND THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR, BARON DE COURCEL.

I. The Governments of Great Britain and France engage to one another that neither of them will, without the consent of the other, in any case, or under any pretext, advance their armed forces into the region which is comprised in the basins of the Petcha Bouri, Meiklong, Menam, and Bang Pa Kong (Petriou) Rivers and their respective tributaries, together with the extent of coast from Muong Bang Tapan to Muong Pase, the basins of the rivers on which those two places are situated, and the basins of the other rivers, the estuaries of which are included in that coast; and including also the territory lying to the north of the basin of the Menam, and situated between the Anglo-Siamese frontier, the Mekong River, and the eastern watershed of the Me Ing. They further engage not to acquire within this region any special privilege or advantage which shall not be enjoyed in common by, or equally open to, Great Britain and France and their nationals and dependents. These stipulations, however, shall not be interpreted as derogating from the special clauses which, in virtue of the Treaty concluded on the 3rd October, 1893, between France and Siam, apply to a zone of 25 kilom. on the right bank of the Mekong and to the navigation of that river.

II. Nothing in the foregoing clause shall hinder any action on which the two Powers may agree, and which they shall think necessary in order to uphold the independence of the Kingdom of Siam. But they engage not to enter into any separate Agreement permitting a third Power to take any action from which they are bound by the present Declaration themselves to abstain.

III. From the mouth of the Nam Huok northwards as far as the Chinese frontier the thalweg of the Mekong shall form the limit of the possessions or spheres of influence of Great Britain and France. It is agreed that the nationals

and dependents of each of the two countries shall not exercise any jurisdiction or authority within the possessions or sphere of influence of the other.

The police of the islands in this part of the river which are separated from the British shore by a branch of the river shall, so long as they are thus separated, be intrusted to the French authorities. The fishery shall be open to the inhabitants of both banks.

IV. The two Governments agree that all commercial and other privileges and advantages conceded in the two Chinese provinces of Yünnan and Szechuen either to Great Britain or France, in virtue of their respective Conventions with China of the 1st March, 1894, and the 20th June, 1895, and all privileges and advantages of any nature which may in the future be conceded in these two Chinese provinces, either to Great Britain or France, shall, as far as rests with them, be extended and rendered common to both Powers and to their nationals and dependents, and they engage to use their influence and good offices with the Chinese Government for this purpose.

AGREEMENT BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND CHINA, MODIFYING THE CONVENTION OF MARCH 1, 1894, RELATIVE TO BURMAH AND THIBET. SIGNED AT PEKING, FEBRUARY 4TH, 1897, BY SIR CLAUDE MACDONALD AND THE CHINESE PLENIPOTENTIARY, LI.

In consideration of the Government of Great Britain consenting to waive its objections to the alienation by China, by the Convention with France of the 20th June, 1895, of territory forming a portion of Kiang Hung, in derogation of the provisions of the Convention between Great Britain and China of the 1st March, 1894, it has been agreed between the Governments of Great Britain and China that the following additions and alterations shall be made in the last-named Convention, hereinafter referred to as the original Convention :—

The first three articles define the modified frontiers, and the most important of the other articles run as follows :—

ARTICLE V.—It is agreed that China will not cede to any other nation either Mung Lem or any part of Kiang Hung

on the right bank of the Mekong, or any part of Kiang Hung now in her possession on the left bank of that river, without previously coming to an arrangement with Great Britain.

ARTICLE IX.—Add as follows :—

In addition to the Manwyne and Sansi routes sanctioned by the Convention of 1894, the Governments of Great Britain and China agree that any other routes, the opening of which the Boundary Commissioners may find to be in the interests of trade, shall be sanctioned on the same terms as those mentioned above.

ARTICLE XII.—Add as follows :—

The Chinese Government agrees hereafter to consider whether the conditions of trade justify the construction of railways in Yünnan, and, in the event of their construction, agrees to connect them with the Burmese lines.

ARTICLE XIII.—Whereas by the original Convention it was agreed that China might appoint a Consul in Burmah, to reside at Rangoon; and that Great Britain might appoint a Consul to reside at Manwyne; and that the Consuls of the two Governments should each within the territories of the other enjoy the same privileges and immunities as the Consuls of the most favoured nation, and, further, that, in proportion as the commerce between Burmah and China increased, additional Consuls might be appointed by mutual consent to reside at such places in Burmah and Yünnan as the requirements of trade might seem to demand.

It has now been agreed that the Government of Great Britain may station a Consul at Momein or Shunning-fu, as the Government of Great Britain may prefer, instead of at Manwyne, as stipulated in the original Convention, and also to station a Consul at Ssumao.

British subjects and persons under British protection may establish themselves, and trade at these places, under the same conditions as at the Treaty ports in China.

The Consuls appointed as above shall be on the same footing as regards correspondence and intercourse with Chinese officials as the British Consuls at the Treaty ports.

THE BAGHDAD RAILWAY

BAGHDAD RAILWAY CONVENTION BETWEEN THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT AND THE ANATOLIAN RAILWAY COMPANY. SIGNED AT CONSTANTINOPLE, MARCH 5TH, 1903.

Entre Son Excellence Zihni Pacha, Ministre du Commerce et des Travaux Publics, agissant au nom du Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman,

d'une part,

Monsieur Arthur Gwinner, Président du Conseil d'Administration, Mr. le Docteur Kurt Zander, Directeur-Général, et Monsieur Edouard Huguenin, Directeur-Général-Adjoint, du Chemin de fer Ottoman d'Anatolie, agissant au nom et pour compte de la Société du Chemin de fer Ottoman d'Anatolie, à Constantinople,

d'autre part ;

Il a été arrêté ce pui suit :

ARTICLE 1.—Le Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman accorde la concession de la construction et de l'exploitation du prolongement de la ligne de Konia jusqu'à Bagdad et Bassorah, en passant par ou aussi près que possible des villes de Karaman, Eregli, Kardach-Béli, Adana, Hamidié, Osmanié, Bagtsché, Kazanali, Killis, Tell-Habesch, Harran, Resulain, Nussibéin, Avniat, Mossoul, Tékrit, Sadijé, Bagdad, Kerbéla, Nédjef, Zubéir et Bassorah, ainsi que des embranchements suivants, savoir:

1) de Tell-Habesch à Alep,

2) d'un point rapproché de la ligne principale, à déterminer d'un commun accord, à Orfa.

Le Gouvernement Impérial n'accordera, sous quelque forme que ce soit, de garantie pour la construction de cet embranchement d'une longueur de 30 kilom. environ, ni aucune

affectation, pour frais d'exploitation, mais les recettes brutes de toute nature de l'embranchement appartiendront exclusivement au Concessionnaire.

3) de Sadijé à Hanékin ;

4) de Zubéir à un point du Golfe Persique à déterminer d'un commun accord entre le Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman et le Concessionnaire, ainsi que de toutes les dépendances des dites lignes. La ligne principale et ses embranchements devant suivre un tracé qui sera approuvé par le Gouvernement Impérial,

à la Société du Chemin de fer Ottoman d'Anatolie aux conditions suivantes :

ARTICLE 2.—La durée de cette Concession sera de quatre-vingt-dix-neuf ans. Cette durée s'appliquera également aux lignes d'Angora et de Konia, et elle commencera à courir à partir de la date de la remise du Firman et l'échange de la présente Convention.

En ce qui concerne les nouvelles lignes, ce délai de quatre-vingt-dix-neuf ans commencera à courir, pour chaque Section distinctement, à partir du moment où le Gouvernement Impérial aura délivré au Concessionnaire les Titres d'Etat en conformité de l'Art. 35 de la présente Convention.

ARTICLE 3.—Ces lignes, prises dans leur ensemble, sont partagées en sections de 200 kilom. de longueur pour ce qui concerne la présentation des plans et projets définitifs. Le Concessionnaire devra, dans un délai de trois mois à partir de la date de la remise du Firman de Concession et l'échange de la présente Convention et du Cahier des Charges (et après l'accomplissement des stipulations de l'Art. 35) présenter au Ministère des Travaux Publics les plans et projets complets après études définitives et conformément aux prescriptions du Cahier des Charges de la première section d'une longueur de 200 kilom., partant de Konia et passant par ou aussi près que possible de Karaman et d'Eregli conformément au tracé de la ligne de Bagdad. Quant aux autres sections, les plans et projets y relatifs seront présentés dans un délai de huit mois à partir de la date à laquelle commencera le délai de Concession de chaque Section par la mise à exécution des stipulations de l'Art. 35 afférentes à chaque section.

Ces plans et projets devront être examinés par le Ministère et, selon le cas approuvés tels quels, ou modifiés, s'il y a lieu, dans le délai de trois mois à partir de la date de leur présentation. Passé ce délai, si le Gouvernement Impérial n'a pas notifié sa décision au Concessionnaire, celui-ci pourra considérer comme approuvés les projets présentés par lui et il procèdera à l'exécution de ses travaux. Si le Gouvernement Impérial apporte à ces projets des modifications de nature à entraîner des retards de plus d'un mois, dans l'approbation des plans, le délai fixé pour la construction sera prolongé d'une période égale à celle du retard causé par l'examen de ces modifications et l'approbation des plans.

Les affectations spéciales destinées à la première section de 200 kilom. partant de Konia et passant par ou aussi près que possible de Karaman et d'Eregli, sont déterminées par l'annexe I (Convention Financière) faisant partie intégrante de la présente Convention.

ARTICLE 4.—Le Concessionnaire s'engage à commencer à ses frais, risques et périls les travaux de cette première section, dans un délai de trois mois à partir de la date de l'approbation des plans et projets de ces 200 premiers kilom. et à les terminer, de même, dans un délai de deux ans au plus tard à partir de la même date.

Le Concessionnaire s'engage à commencer les travaux dans un délai de trois mois à partir de la date d'approbation des plans et projets relatifs aux autres sections, et à terminer l'ensemble de la ligne et ses embranchements, dans un délai de 8 ans à partir de la date de la remise du Firman et de l'échange de la présente Convention. Toutefois, tous retards apportés dans la mise à exécution des stipulations de l'Art. 35 pour une section quelconque, c'est-à-dire tous retards apportés dans la remise des titres par le Gouvernement Impérial au Concessionnaire seront ajoutés au dit délai de huit années. Les travaux devront être exécutés conformément aux règles de l'art et aux prescriptions du Cahier des Charges ci-annexé, ainsi qu'aux dispositions des plans et projets approuvés ; toutefois, en cas de force majeure, les délais d'exécution seront prolongés d'une durée égale à celle de l'interruption des travaux, à la condition que le Concessionnaire avisera immédiatement les autorités locales, ainsi que le Ministère des Travaux Publics.

Seront également considérés comme cas de force majeure,

une guerre entre Puissances Européennes, ainsi qu'un changement capital dans la situation financière de l'Allemagne, de l'Angleterre ou de la France.

ARTICLE 5.—Le Ministère des Travaux Publics contrôlera les travaux par l'intermédiaire d'un ou plusieurs Commissaires durant leur exécution, à l'achèvement des Travaux et avant leur réception. Ce contrôle s'appliquera, de même, à l'exploitation et au bon entretien des travaux pendant la durée de la Concession.

Le Concessionnaire déposera chaque année, à l'ordre du Ministère des Travaux Publics, et à titre de frais de contrôle, une somme de deux-cent-soixante-dix Piastres or par kilom., payable mensuellement, et ce, à partir de la date fixée pour le commencement des travaux jusqu'à la fin de la Concession.

ARTICLE 6.—L'entreprise étant d'utilité publique, les terrains nécessaires à l'établissement du Chemin de fer et de ses dépendances, les carrières et les ballastières nécessaires au Chemin de fer et appartenant à des particuliers, seront pris, conformément à la loi sur l'expropriation, toutes les fois qu'une entente ne pourra pas être établie entre le Concessionnaire et les propriétaires pour l'achat de ces terrains.

Le Gouvernement fera procéder à l'expropriation et à la remise au Concessionnaire des terrains nécessaires à l'établissement de la voie et de ses dépendances, après que le tracé du Chemin de fer aura été approuvé et appliqué sur le terrain. Cette remise sera faite par le Gouvernement dans le délai de deux mois.

Les terrains nécessaires pour l'occupation temporaire pendant les travaux seront livrés au Concessionnaire par les Autorités locales à charge pour lui d'en indemniser les propriétaires.

Si dans les dits terrains nécessaires à l'établissement du Chemin de fer et de ses dépendances, il se trouve des terrains dits Arazii-Emiriéi-Halié, ceux-ci seront abandonnés gratuitement au Concessionnaire.

Si dans une zône de 15 kilom. de chaque côté du Chemin de fer, il se trouve des terrains dits Arazii-Emiriéi-Halié et que dans ceux-ci se trouve des carrières et ballastières, le Concessionnaire pourra les exploiter gratuitement pendant la période de la construction, à charge pour lui de les fermer, une fois les travaux achevés ; dans le cas où le Concession-

naire désirerait faire usage de ces carrières et ballastières pendant la période d'exploitation, il devra se conformer aux règlements régissant la matière et payer la redevance fixée à cet égard.

L'occupation temporaire de ces terrains, durant les travaux de construction, lui sera également accordée à titre gratuit.

ARTICLE 7.—Les lignes seront construites à une seule voie ; cependant les terrains seront acquis en vue de l'établissement d'une seconde voie. Aussitôt que les recettes brutes kilométriques atteindront annuellement le chiffre de 30 000 Frcs., le Gouvernement Impérial aura le droit de réclamer l'établissement de la seconde voi que le Concessionnaire sera tenu de construire à ses frais.

ARTICLE 8.—Le matériel de la voie et les matériaux, fers, bois, houille, machines, voitures et wagons et autres approvisionnements nécessaires au premier établissement ainsi qu'aux agrandissements et augmentations en général du Chemin de fer et de ses dépendances, que le Concessionnaire achètera dans l'Empire ou qu'il fera venir de l'étranger, seront exempts de tous impôts intérieurs et de tous droits de douane. La franchise des droits de douane est aussi accordée pour la houille nécessaire à l'exploitation et que le Concessionnaire ferait venir de l'étranger jusqu'à ce que les recettes brutes de la ligne et de ses embranchements atteignent 15 500 Frcs. par kilom. De même, pendant toute la durée de la Concession, le sol, fonds et revenu du Chemin de fer et de ses dépendances ne seront passibles d'aucun impôt, et il ne sera perçu aucun droit de timbre sur la présente Convention et le Cahier des Charges annexé, sur les Conventions additionnelles et tous actes subséquents, ou pour le service des Titres d'Etat à émettre ; sur les montants encaissés par le Concessionnaire du chef du forfait d'exploitation, ni aucun droit sur ses actions, ses actions de priorité et ses obligations, comme aussi sur les Titres que le Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman délivrera au Concessionnaire.

Le Concessionnaire sera soumis aux droits de timbre pour toutes ses opérations autres que celles pour lesquelles la franchise lui est accordée dans le présent Article.

Le Concessionnaire formera une Société Anonyme Ottomane sous le nom de „Société Impériale Ottomane du Chemin

de fer de Bagdad" qui remplacera la Société du Chemin de fer Ottomane d'Anatolie pour tout ce qui concerne la nouvelle ligne de Konia au Golf Persique, avec ses embranchements et qui sera régie par les statuts ci-annexés.

La Société du Chemin de fer Ottoman d'Anatolie s'engage à ne jamais céder ni transférer à une autre Société les lignes existantes de Haidar-Pacha à Angora et à Konia.

La Société Impériale Ottomane du Chemin de fer de Bagdad, qui sera formée, prend de même l'engagement de ne céder ni transférer, les lignes à construire de Konia à Bagdad et à Bassorah et ses embranchements.

ARTICLE 9. — Les matériaux de construction et autre nécessaires pour la construction et l'exploitation de cette ligne et des ses embranchements, ainsi que les agents et ouvriers seront transportés, seulement pendant la durée de la construction et sous la surveillance du Ministère de la Marine, sur le Chatt el Arab, le Tigre et l'Euphrate, avec des navires à vapeur ou à voiles ou autres embarcations qui seront procurées ou louées par la Société.

Ce matériel de transport jouira de l'exemption de droits de douane, impôts et autres.

ARTICLE 10.—Les bois et charpants nécessaires à la construction et à l'exploitation du Chemin de fer pourront être coupés dans les forêts des régions voisines appartenant à l'Etat, conformément au règlement y relatif.

ARTICLE 11.—Aussitôt que le Concessionnaire notifiera au Ministère des Travaux Publics l'achèvement des travaux d'une section, celui-ci fera inspecter les travaux exécutés par une Commission technique nommée à cet effet, et procèdera à la réception provisoire, s'il y a lieu; un an après la réception provisoire, une seconde inspection des travaux sera faite par une Commission technique, et dans le cas où il sera constaté que les travaux ont été exécutés conformément aux règles de l'art et aux prescriptions du Cahier des Charges, le Ministère des Travaux Publics prononcera sur le rapport de la Commission la réception définitive.

Le Concessionnaire aura le droit d'ouvrir les lignes à l'exploitation par sections successives après leur réception provisoire. Les longueurs de ces sections achevées, à partir de Konia, d'Adana, de Bagdad, de Bassorah, comme aussi des différents points intermédiaires, seront d'au moins 40 kilom. et devront aboutir à une station.

ARTICLE 12.—Dans le cas où le Gouvernement Impérial déciderait l'exécution d'embranchements reliant le Chemin de fer faisant l'objet de la présente Convention à la mer, en un point situé entre Mersine et Tripolis de Syrie, il ne pourra accorder la concession des dits embranchements, qu'exclusivement au Concessionnaire sous réserve toutefois de sauvegarder les droits déjà accordés à la Société du Chemin de fer de Damas-Hamah et Prolongements.

Toutefois, si le Concessionnaire, dans un délai maximum d'une année compté à partir de la notification qui lui en serait faite par le Gouvernement Impérial, n'acceptait pas de construire le ou les embranchements en question aux clauses et conditions de la présente Concession, ou qu'ayant accepté, il ne les exécutait pas dans les délais arrêtés entre le Gouvernement Impérial et le Concessionnaire, ce dernier sera déchu de tout droit aux dits embranchements, et le Gouvernement Impérial pourra en accorder la concession à des tiers.

Le Concessionnaire aura en outre le droit de préférence à conditions égales, pour les embranchements suivants :

a) vers Marach ;
b) vers Aintab ;
c) vers Birédjik ;
d) vers Mardin ;
e) vers Erbil ;
f) du Diala vers Salahié et Touzkourmatli ;
g) de El-Badj à Hit.

Ce droit de préférence pour les sept embranchements spécifiés ci-dessus, pour être valable, est subordonné aux conditions suivantes, savoir :

Si le Gouvernement Impérial décidait d'une manière définitive d'accorder à des tiers la concession d'un de ces embranchements, le Concessionnaire est obligé dans un délai de neuf mois à partir de la date de la notification qui lui en sera faite par le Ministère du Commerce et des Travaux Publics, de déclarer au Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman s'il veut assumer cette concession aux conditions acceptées par les tiers dont il vient d'être parlé.

ARTICLE 13.—Le Concessionnaire aura le droit d'établir et d'exploiter sur la ligne, avec la permission des autorités locales, des tuileries et des briqueteries. Les machines et

outils destinés aux dites fabriques, jouiront des mêmes exemptions accordées au matériel et outillage de Chemin de fer. Le charbon qui sera consommé dans ces fabriques jouira de la franchise du droit de douane.

Ces fabriques feront gratuitement retour à l'Etat à l'expiration de la Concession.

ARTICLE 14.—Pendant toute la durée de la Concession, le Concessionnaire est obligé de tenir dans un parfait état d'entretien à ses frais, le Chemin de fer et ses dépendances, ainsi que son matérial fixe et roulant, faute de quoi, il sera procédé à son égard, conformément à l'Art. 16 du Cahier des Charges.

ARTICLE 15.—Le Concessionnaire est tenu de se conformer, quant à ce qui concerne la police et la sécurité de la voie, aux lois et règlements actuellement en vigueur et à promulguer, à l'avenir, dans l'Empire Ottoman.

Le Gouvernement Impérial prendra les mesures nécessaires pour le maintien de l'ordre le long de la ligne et sur les chantiers de construction.

Dans le cas d'interruption du service des transports sur une partie ou sur la totalité de la voie, par la faute du Concessionnaire, le Gouvernement Impérial prendra aux frais, risques et périls du Concessionnaire, les mesures nécessaires conformément à l'Art. 16 du Cahier des Charges pour assurer provisoirement l'exploitation.

Article 16.—Le Concessionnaire aura le droit de percevoir des droits de péage, conformément aux tarifs du Cahier des Charges, à partir de la réception provisoire de chaque section du Chemin de fer jusqu'à l'expiration de la Concession.

ARTICLE 17.—Le transport des militaires des Armées de terre et de mer, voyageant en corps ou isolément, tant en temps de guerre qu'en temps de paix, ainsi que du matériel et approvisionnements de guerre, des prisonniers et condamnés, des agents de l'Etat, des valises postales, sera effectué conformément aux prescriptions du Titre V du Cahier des Charges.

ARTICLE 18.—Comme garantie de l'exécution des présents engagements, le Concessionnaire devra, dans le délai de trois mois à partir du jour où la promulgation du Firman de Concession lui sera notifiée officiellement, déposer à une Banque de Constantinople agréée par le Gouvernement, et à titre de

cautionnement une somme de Ltqs. 30 000 en numéraire ou en Titres de l'Etat ou d'une Société Anonyme Ottomane ou garantie par l'Etat, au cours du jour.

Si le dépôt se fait en titres, la Banque fera prendre l'engagement de parfaire la différence en cas de baisse de prix. Aussitôt après le depôt du cautionnement, le Firman de Concession sera remis au Concessionnaire.

Le cautionnement ne sera restitué qu'à la réception définitive des travaux et proportionnellement à la longueur des sections livrées à l'exploitation ; si dans le délai de trois mois précité, le Concessionnaire n'effectue pas le dépôt susénoncé, il sera déchu sans aucune mise en demeure préalable de tous droits à la Concession.

Dans le cas où l'exécution des stipulations de l'Art. 35 ne pourrait avoir lieu, le Concessionnaire aura le droit de toucher son cautionnement sans aucune formalité et sans qu'il ait à demander le consentement préalable du Gouvernement.

ARTICLE 19.—Le Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman conserve la faculté de reprendre la Concession à quelque époque que cela soit de la ligne de Konia à Bassorah et embranchements, moyennant le paiement au Concessionnaire jusqu'à la fin de la Concession, d'une somme annuelle équivalente aux 50% des recettes brutes moyennes des cinq années qui précèderont l'année de la reprise de la Concession, sans que la dite somme annuelle puisse être inférieure à Frcs. 12 000 par kilom. Dans ce cas le Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman devra rembourser entièrement et en une seule fois les Titres d'Etat qui auront été accordés au Concessionnaire et qui n'auraient pas été amortis antérieurement, et la somme annuelle à laquelle le Concessionnaire a droit en vertu du présent Article, sera diminuée de l'annuité des dits Emprunts, à savoir de Frcs. 11 000 par kilom. Le Gouvernement assurera au Concessionnaire le paiement régulier aux époques determinées, du solde lui revenant du chef de la reprise de Concession qui fera l'objet d'une Convention spéciale.

Il sera procédé à la remise des lignes et de toutes leurs dépendances au Gouvernement, ainsi qu'à l'achat par ce dernier du matériel, matériaux et approvisionnements existants conformément à l'Art. 19 du Cahier des Charges.

En cas de reprise de la Concession de la ligne, si le

Gouvernement Impérial ne juge pas convenable d'exploiter par ses propres agents, il n'en cèdera pas l'exploitation à une autre Société, mais il promet de la faire exploiter par le Concessionnaire par voie de bail.

ARTICLE 20.—A l'expiration de la Concession de chaque section le Gouvernement Impérial sera substitué à tous les droits du Concessionnaire sur le Chemin de fer et ses dépendances, ainsi que sur le matériel et matériaux et entrera en jouissance des produits y afférents.

Il sera procédé à la remise des lignes et de leurs dépendances libres de toute dette et engagement, au Gouvernement Impérial et à l'achat par ce dernier du matériel et approvisionnements conformément à l'Art. 20 du Cahier des Charges.

ARTICLE 21.—Les employés et agents du Chemin de fer porteront la tenue qui sera fixée et adoptée par le Gouvernement Impérial ; ils porteront tous le fez et ils seront, autant que possible choisis parmi les sujets ottomans.

Cinq ans après la date de l'ouverture à l'exploitation de chaque section tout le personnel exécutif de l'exploitation de chaque section, sauf les fonctionnaires supérieurs, devra être exclusivement composé de sujets ottomans.

ARTICLE 22.—Le Concessionnaire pourra exploiter les mines qu'il aura découvertes dans une zône de 20 kilom. de chaque côté de l'axe de la voie, en se conformant aux lois et règlements y relatifs, et sans que cela constitue pour lui un privilège ou un monopole.

Il pourra de même opérer des coupes dans les forêts avoisinant la ligne, soit pour faire du bois de charpente, soit pour faire du charbon, après recours à l'Administration compétente et en se conformant aux règlements régissant la matière.

ARTICLE 23.—Le Concessionnaire aura la faculté de construire à ses frais à Bagdad, Bassorah et au point terminus de l'embranchement partant de Zubéir, des ports avec toutes les installations nécessaires pour l'accostage à quai des vavires, et l'embarquement, le débarquement et le magasinage des marchandises.

Le projet de ces ports devra être présenté dans un délai maximum de huit ans, à partir de l'échange de la présente Convention, et les travaux de chaque port devront être

achevés au plus tard dans douze ans à partir de la date du commencement des travaux de chaque section où se trouve le port respectif.

Aux projets seront joints les tarifs à appliquer.

Ces trois ports feront partie intégrante du Chemin de fer, et les recettes nettes en seront versées au compte des recettes bruttes du chemin de fer.

A l'expiration de la Concession, ces ports et leurs dépendances feront gratuitement retour à l'Etat.

Dans le cas où le Concessionnaire n'exécuterait pas l'un ou l'autre de ces ports dans le délai ci-dessus, le Gouvernement Impérial pourra en accorder la concession à des tiers.

En tous cas le Concessionnaire pourra pendant la période de construction du Chemin de fer, établir en ces trois points, ainsi que dans le port de Castaboul, des installations provisoires pour le débarquement des matériaux destinés au Chemin de fer.

Ces installations devront, si le Gouvernement Impérial en fait la demande, être supprimées après l'achèvement des travaux.

ARTICLE 24. — Le Concessionnaire pourra, également, établir et exploiter, là où le besoin s'en fera sentir, et sur les terrains faisant partie du domaine du Chemin de fer, des dépôts et magasins dont l'usage sera facultatif pour le public.

Ces dépôts, magasins et autres installations fixes deviendront propriété du Gouvernement à l'expiration de la Concession, en conformité de l'Art. 20 du Cahier des Charges.

Le Gouvernement aura une participation de 25% dans les recettes nettes de ces dépôts et magasins.

ARTICLE 25.—Le Concessionnaire est autorisé à utiliser gratuitement le long des lignes, les forces hydrauliques naturelles dont le droit de jouissance n'appartient à personne, ou à créer, destinées à produire l'énergie électrique pour la traction des trains, leur éclairage et pour l'usage des differents services de l'exploitation. Les plans et projets des travaux à exécuter dans ce but seront soumis à l'approbation du Ministère du Commerce et des Travaux Publics.

Dans le cas où on ferait usage de cette énergie électrique, les 50% de l'économie résultant de ce chef dans les frais d'exploitation seront portés au crédit du Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman.

Toutes ces installations feront gratuitement retour à l'Etat, à l'expiration de la Concession.

ARTICLE 26.—Le Gouvernement pourra faire élever, à ses frais, des retranchements et travaux de défense sur les points de la ligne principale ou de ses embranchements et où il le jugera nécessaire.

ARTICLE 27.—Les objets d'art et antiquités découverts pendant les travaux, seront soumis aux règlements régissant la matière.

Toutefois, le Concessionnaire sera dispensé de la formalité de présenter une demande et d'obtenir une autorisation pour les recherches.

ARTICLE 28.—Le Concessionnaire est tenu de présenter au Ministère des Travaux Publics un état mensuel de toutes les recettes ; ces états seront dressés conformément aux indications de l'Art. 17 du Cahier des Charges.

ARTICLE 29.—Le Chemin de fer étant considéré comme divisé en sections de 200 kilom. de longueur, si le Concessionnaire, à moins d'un cas de force majeure dûment constaté, n'avait pas commencé les travaux dans les délais fixés, ou s'il ne terminait pas les travaux d'une section dans les délais fixés, ou s'il interrompait le service des transports, ou enfin s'il n'exécutait pas, pour une section quelconque, les autres principaux engagements découlant de la présente Convention, le Gouvernement Impérial fera au Concessionnaire une mise en demeure indiquant lesquelles des susdites obligations restent à remplir par le Concessionnaire, et si ce dernier, dans l'espace de 18 mois à partir de la date de cette mise en demeure, ne lui a pas donné la suite qu'elle comporte, il sera déchu de ses droits concessionnels pour toute section de ligne pour laquelle il aura été dûment constaté en défaut et il sera procédé à son égard en conformité de l'Art. 18 du Cahier des Charges.

Il est entendu que tant que la ligne principale entre Konia et Bagdad ne sera pas achevée en son entier, le Concessionnaire ne pourra pas mettre en exploitation les parties de la ligne de Bagdad à Bassorah qu'il aurait construites.

Pendant cette période de non exploitation des sections comprises entre Bagdad et Bassorah, le Concessionnaire remboursera au Gouvernement Impérial à l'échéance des annuités, l'annuité de 11 000 Frcs. par kilom. payée pour

intérêts et amortissement des Titres que le Gouvernement Impérial lui aura remis pour les dites sections, et il ne touchera naturellement pas les frais d'exploitation ; mais ces clauses n'infirment en rien les autres droits du Concessionnaire sur la ligne de Bagdad à Bassorah.

La déchéance prononcée sur une ou plusieurs sections du Chemin de fer ne portera aucune atteinte aux droits du Concessionnaire, quant au reste des sections des nouvelles lignes, non plus que quant à l'ensemble des anciennes lignes.

ARTICLE 30. — Le Concessionnaire établira gratuitement sur les points désignés par le Gouvernement, les locaux nécessaires aux bureaux des Commissaires Impériaux du Chemin de fer et des employés de la Douane, des Postes et de la Police.

Le Concessionnaire établira dans les stations importantes, après entente avec le Ministère du Commerce et des Travaux Publics, deux chambres avec Water-Closet pour le service postal.

ARTICLE 31.—Le Concessionnaire pourra établir, à ses frais, sur tout le parcours de la voie, des poteaux et des fils télégraphiques ; cette ligne ne pourra pas servir aux correspondances privées n'ayant pas trait à l'exploitation du Chemin de fer.

Le Gouvernement Impérial se réserve le droit de faire contrôler à tout moment par des inspecteurs délégués par le Ministère des Postes et Télégraphes, toute la correspondance télégraphique effectuée par les fils de la Société.

Le Gouvernement pourra faire usage des poteaux du Chemin de fer pour l'établissement d'un et au besoin de deux fils télégraphiques, et les poteaux du Chemin de fer seront établis de façon à pouvoir supporter ces deux fils supplémentaires ainsi que ceux de la Société. En cas de besoin le Gouvernement aura le droit de faire établir à ses frais d'autres poteaux sur le parcours de la voie, ou d'installer, en cas de rupture et de dérangement de ses lignes, des télégraphistes dans les stations pour la transmission par les lignes télégraphiques du Chemin de fer des dépêches officielles importantes et urgentes, à la condition toutefois, de n'apporter aucune entrave au service du Chemin de fer.

ARTICLE 32.—Le Concessionnaire aura le droit de faire

transporter, avec ses propres moyens de transport et sans payer aucune taxe à l'Administration des Postes de l'Empire, les correspondances et valises concernant exclusivement le service du Chemin de fer ; mais à la condition de les soumettre, suivant la règle, au contrôle des agents de l'Administration des Postes. Les lettres privées du personnel seront soumises aux taxes postales. Le Concessionnaire ne pourra effectuer le transport de lettres de cette nature qu'en se soumettant aux prescriptions du Règlement intérieur des Postes en vigueur dans l'Empire. Il aura également le droit de faire transporter et, sans leur appliquer aucune taxe, les objets et matières de consommation, tels que houille, graisses, les matériaux et le matériel nécessaires à la construction, à l'entretien et à l'exploitation du Chemin de fer, tant sur les lignes existantes que sur les lignes faisant l'objet de la présente Convention.

ARTICLE 33.—Le Gouvernement Impérial s'engage à faire desservir par l'Administration de la Mahsoussé la ligne de Haidar-Pacha à Sirkedji et au pont de Karakeuy par trois bateaux neufs ayant, en service, une vitesse moyenne à l'heure d'au moins 14 Milles de 1855 mètres.

Si dans un délai de un an compté à partir le la date de l'échange de la présente Convention, l'Administration de la Mahsoussé n'organisait pas le service dans les conditions indiquées ci-dessus, le Concessionnaire aura le droit de faire le transport des voyageurs et des marchandises entre les dits points, à la condition de choisir les équipages de ces bateaux, parmi les anciens officiers et marins de la Flotte Impériale ou parmi les élèves diplômés de l'Ecole Navale Impériale.

Les bateaux du Concessionnaire feront leur service au lieu et place de ceux de l'Administration de la Mahsoussé, tout en restant exclusivement affectés au susdit service de transport, et le Concessionnaire versera annuellement à cette Administration, une somme égale aux 5% des recettes brutes afférentes aux transports de voyageurs et de marchandises effectués par lui entre les points susmentionnés.

De l'excédant des recettes brutes, on déduira :

1. les frais d'exploitation ;

2. une annuité de 8,30% du capital de premier établissement affecté à l'acquisition des bateaux ; après avoir défalqué les dites sommes, le restant sera porté au compte des recettes brutes des nouvelles lignes garanties.

Le montant du capital de premier établissement sera arrêté après l'achat des bateaux.

Il est bien entendu que si les recettes brutes d'une année ne permettent pas de faire face aux frais précités, la Société n'aura rien à réclamer du Gouvernement Impérial.

Par contre, elle pourra prélever le déficit sur les recettes des années suivantes.

Les bateaux du Concessionnaire étant considérés comme une section de la Mahsoussé, ils jouiront des mêmes droits que celle-ci.

ARTICLE 34.—La Société Concessionnaire, et celle que cette dernière constituera étant anonymes Ottomanes, toutes contestations et différends qui surviendraient, soit entre le Gouvernement Impérial et le Concessionnaire ou la Société, soit entre le Concessionnaire ou la Société et les particuliers, par suite de l'exécution ou de l'interprétation de la présente Convention et du Cahier des Charges y annexé, seront déférés aux Tribunaux compétents Ottomans.

La nouvelle Société étant Ottomane, elle devra correspondre avec les Départements de l'État en langue turque, qui est la langue officielle du Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman.

ARTICLE 35.—Le Gouvernement Impérial garantit au Concessionnaire, par kilom. construit et exploité, une annuité de Frcs. 11 000 ainsi qu'une somme forfaitaire de 4 500 Frcs. par année et par kilom. exploité pour frais d'exploitation.

Cette annuité de 11 000 Frcs. sera représentée par un Emprunt de l'État Ottoman, portant 4% d'intérêt et 0,087 538% d'amortissement, amortissable pendant la durée de la Concession. Le Concessionnaire aura donc droit à un montant nominal de Frcs. 269 110,65 de cet Emprunt d'Etat, pour chaque kilom. construit et exploité, sans que le Concessionnaire puisse demander d'autres sommes de ce chef au Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman.

Le montant total nominal de Titres de l'État revenant au Concessionnaire en conformité de ce qui précède, lui sera remis par le Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman, à la signature de chaque Convention spéciale pour chaque section, mais le Concessionnaire devra bonifier au Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman, les sommes que celui-ci aura payées pendant la période de construction, pour le service des Titres remis au

Concessionnaire, c'est-à-dire jusqu'à la date de la réception provisoire de chaque section du Chemin de fer. Ces sommes seront remises par le Concessionnaire entre les mains de la Dette Publique, pour le compte du Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman.

Le Gouvernement Impérial se réserve le droit de modifier à tout moment le système de paiement de l'annuité kilométrique de 11 000 Frcs. fixée au 1er alinéa du présent Article, après remboursement des Titres d'Etat émis en représentation de la dite annuité.

Aussitôt que le développement du trafic et des recettes et la situation financière, permettront l'émission de titres privés par le Concessionnaire lui-même, destinés à remplacer les titres d'État qui lui auront été délivrés par le Gouvernement Impérial, le Concessionnaire se mettra d'accord avec le Gouvernement Impérial pour procéder à cet effet.

Pour la première section de 200 kilomètres au delà de Konia, le montant nominal des Titres à remettre par le Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman au Concessionnaire, est fixé à 54 000 000 de Frcs. Mais lors de la réception définitive de cette section, et aussitôt que la longueur de la ligne exécutée sera arrêtée, on établira le montant nominal exact des Titres, à raison de Frcs. 269 110,65 par kilom. qui sera acquis au Concessionnaire pour cette section. Le surplus du montant nominal, sera calculé au cours d'émission, plus les intérêts 4% courus jusqu'au jour du paiement, et sera versé en effectif, par le Concessionnaire, au Trésor Impérial. Il est bien entendu que ce calcul sera fait au minimum à 81½%.

La Société du Chemin de fer Ottoman d'Anatolie se porte garante vis-à-vis du Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman pour la construction de la dite première section de 200 kilom. jusqu'à l'achèvement des travaux de cette section.

Dans le cas où le Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman le jugera nécessaire, il pourra aussi demander à la Société du Chemin de fer Ottoman d'Anatolie de se porter garante pour d'autres sections et la Société du Chemin de fer Ottoman d'Anatolie aura le droit de le faire.

La somme forfaitaire pour frais d'exploitation, de Frcs. 4 500 par an et par kilom. exploité, sera garantie au Concessionnaire par une Convention spéciale pour chaque section, simultanément avec la Convention qui règlera l'annuité de 11 000 Frcs.

En ce qui concerne la première section de 200 kilom. au delà de Konia, cette somme forfaitaire de 4 500 Frcs. par kilom. et par an, est garantie au Concessionnaire par les excédents des garanties actuellement affectées au lignes de la Société du Chemin de fer Ottoman d'Anatolie.

Le service des Titres de l'État à émettre pour la dite annuité kilométrique de 11 000 Frcs., sera assuré par les affectations spéciales, déterminées d'un commun accord avec le Gouvernement Impérial avant la mise à exécution de chaque section.

En outre, la Société Impériale Ottomane du Chemin de fer de Bagdad, de son côté, affecte en gage d'une façon irrévocable et inaliénable, aux porteurs de ces mêmes titres, la ligne de Konia au Golfe Persique et ses embranchements, avec leur matériel roulant. Elle affecte pareillement et pour le même objet, sa part dans les recettes de cette ligne, après paiement des frais d'exploitation, mais les porteurs des Titres n'auront aucun droit de s'immiscer dans l'Administration de la Société.

La dite part des recettes, déduction faite des frais d'exploitation, tels que cette part et ces frais seront établis par les comptes de la Société, sera, en cas de besoin, versés annuellement par celle-ci à l'Administration de la Dette Publique Ottomane, pour le compte du service des Titres. Le Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman remboursera à la Société lus sommes que celle-ci pourrait avoir fournies de ce chef, pour compte du service des Titres émis. Le Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman affecte encore d'une façon irrévocable et inaliénable, aux porteurs des Titres d'Etat précités, la part lui revenant dans les recettes brutes de la dite ligne.

Si la recette kilométrique brute de la ligne, dépasse 4 500 Frcs., mais sans dépasser 10 000 Frcs., l'excédent au delà de 4 500 Frcs. reviendra entièrement au Gouvernement.

Si la recette kilométrique brute dépasse 10 000 Frcs., la partie jusqu'à 10 000 Frcs. devant toujours être partagée comme il est dit plus haut, les 60% de l'excédent au delà de ces 10 000 Frcs. reviendront au Gouvernement Impérial et les 40% à la Société.

Il est bien entendu que si la recette kilométrique brute n'atteint pas 4 500 Frcs., la somme nécessaire pour parfaire la différence de ce chiffre sera payée au Concessionnaire par le Gouvernement en même temps que l'annuité de

Frcs. 11 000 sur les affectations spéciales à déterminer d'un commun accord entre le Gouvernement Impérial et le Concessionnaire, avant la mise à exécution par le Concessionnaire des clauses de la présente Convention afférente à chaque section.

Les dites affectations seront encaissées et payées par les soins de l'Administration de la Dette Publique Ottomane.

Pour les Titres d'Etat à émettre pour l'exécution des différentes sections du Chemin de fer, masse commune sera faite des recettes revenant au Gouvernement Impérial, de façon à ce que le montant disponible reste affecté à la communauté de ces mêmes Titres dans la proportion du montant primitif nominal de chaque émission.

Aussitôt après le paiement des coupons et de l'amortissement des Titres d'Etat émis, le surplus des recettes appartenant au Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman, sera versé à celui-ci chaque année, après accomplissement des formalités prévues à l'Art. 40 de la présente Convention.

ARTICLE 36.—Pour pouvoir déterminer la moyenne des recettes kilométriques des nouvelles lignes de Bagdad, il sera fait masse, au fur et à mesure de la mise en exploitation des sections des nouvelles lignes, de toutes les recettes afférentes à toutes les parties des nouvelles lignes ainsi que des recettes nettes prévues aux Articles 23 et 33 de la présente Convention.

La moyenne des recettes brutes kilométriques ainsi obtenue servira de base pour déterminer le montant des sommes à payer en conformité de l'Art. 35.

ARTICLE 37. — Le Concessionnaire prend l'engagement d'exécuter à ses frais, sur les anciennes lignes de Haidar-Pacha à Angora et Eski-Chehir à Konia, toutes les améliorations exigées par l'introduction d'un service de trains express et ce jusqu'à concurrence d'une dépense de huit Millions de Francs.

En compensation de ces frais et des nouvelles charges extraordinaires qu'entraînera pour l'exploitation, l'introduction du service des trains express, le Gouvernement Impérial reconnaît au Concessionnaire :

1) une annuité de 350 000 Frcs. pendant trente ans pour le service de l'intérêt et de l'amortissement du capital de huit Millions de Frcs. ci-dessus.

Cette annuité commencera à courir à partir du commencement des travaux d'amélioration.

2) une annuité de 350 000 Frcs. pour l'établissement des trains express.

Cette dernière annuité ne sera exigible qu'à partir du moment où la ligne principale aboutira à Alep.

Les annuités prévues au présent Article, seront payées à la Société du Chemin de fer Ottoman d'Anatolie sur les affectations actuelles aux garanties de l'ancien réseau, et de la même manière que celles-ci.

ARTICLE 38.—Le Concessionnaire s'engage à construire et à exploiter, aussitôt que le Gouvernement Impérial lui en fera la demande, aux conditions de la présente Convention, un embranchement partant de la ligne Konia-Bassorah, et aboutissant à Diarbékir et à Karpout.

ARTICLE 39.—Le raccordement éventuel de la ligne de Damas-Hamah et Prolongements, avec le réseau faisant l'objet de la présente Convention, aura lieu à Alep.

ARTICLE 40.—Le Concessionnaire remettra au Ministère des Travaux Publics, dans le courant du mois de Janvier de chaque année, les comptes des recettes préalablement vérifiés et approuvés par le Commissaire Impérial sur la base desquels les sommes revenant au Gouvernement Impérial et à la Société seront déterminées en conformité de l'Art. 35 de la présente Convention.

Aussitôt que le montant de la part du Gouvernement dans ces recettes sera établi, la Société Impériale Ottomane du Chemin de fer de Bagdad en fera le versement pour le compte du service des Titres d'État à l'Administration de la Dette Publique Ottomane et celle-ci remettra en effectif au Gouvernement Impérial tout surplus qui restera disponible au delà des sommes exigées pour le paiement du coupon échéant le 1 er Juillet de l'Exercice en cours.

Le Gouvernement Impérial s'engage de son côté à faire connaître à l'Administration de la Dette Publique dans les deux mois qui suivront la présentation des comptes de recettes d'un Exercice, le montant des sommes reconnues dûes à la Société pour son paiement immédiat.

ARTICLE 41.—Le Concessionnaire aura la faculté d'établir entre Hamidié et le port de Castaboul, un embranchement provisoire pour transporter le matériel et les matériaux nécessaires au Chemin de fer. Il est toutefois entendu qu'après l'achèvement des travaux faisant l'objet de la

présente Convention le Concessionnaire devra, si le Gouvernement Impérial lui en notifie la demande, enlever les rails de cet embranchement provisoire.

Il est bien entendu que durant cette exploitation provisoire le Gouvernement Impérial ne payera pour le dit embranchement, ni annuité, ni frais d'exploitation.

ARTICLE 42.—Les terrains et carrières qui seront expropriés conformément à l'Art. 6 de la Convention, seront de l'étendue strictement nécessaire pour les travaux du Chemin de fer et de toutes ses dépendances, et ne pourront pas être d'une étendue plus grande. Les expropriations se feront sous la surveillance du Ministère des Travaux Publics.

ARTICLE 43.—Tous les matériaux et le matériel nécessaires pour la construction des nouvelles lignes et de toutes leurs dépendances, dont il est question dans l'Art. 8 de la Convention, étant exempts de tous impôts et droits de douane, seront à l'arrivée, inspectées conformément à l'usage, par les employés de la Douane.

ARTICLE 44.—Les dépôts et les magasins à construire sur les terrains des stations, conformément à l'Article 24 de la Convention, ne serviront qu'à l'emmagasinement des marchandises à transporter.

Ces dépôts et magasins seront construits conformément aux plans qui seront présentés par le Concessionnaire et approuvés par le Ministère des Travaux Publics.

ARTICLE 45.—Le Concessionnaire devra établir à ses frais, et jusqu'à concurrence d'une dépense totale de quatre Millions de Francs les stations militaires qui seraient reconnues nécessaires par le Ministère de la Guerre. Le nombre, l'emplacement et les dispositions de ces stations militaires et leurs dépendances seront arrêtés après entente entre le Concessionnaire et le Ministère de la Guerre.

ARTICLE 46.—Le Concessionnaire s'engage à verser annuellement à l'Asile des Pauvres, à partir de l'ouverture à l'exploitation de la ligne principale, une somme de 500 Livres Turques.

La présente Convention a été, conformément à l'Iradé promulgué par Sa Majesté Impériale le Sultan, faite en double, signée et échangée à Constantinople.

La présente Convention, Cahier des Charges[1] et le Firman

[1] The *Cahier des Charges* bears the same signatures and date as the Convention.

Impérial seront échangés avec la Convention et Cahier des Charges du 8/21 Janvier 1317 (1902) 11 Chewal 1319 et le Firman Impérial en date du 8 Zilhidjé 1319.

Fait le 20 Février 1318, 5 Mars 1903.

Certifié conforme à l'original.
Le Directeur du Bureau de Traduction
du Ministère du Commerce et des Travaux Publics.

(s.) MOUHIB.

(s.) ARTHUR GWINNER.
(s.) KURT ZANDER. (s.) ZIHNI.
(s.) HUGUENIN.

STATUTES OF THE "IMPERIAL OTTOMAN BAGHDAD RAILWAY COMPANY" (1903)

The following are the most important articles of the Statutes of the new Company :—

ARTICLE 1.—Il est formé entre la soussignée et tous les propriétaires des actions ci-après créées, une Société Anonyme Ottomane ayant pour objet de construire, administrer et exploiter les lignes du Chemin de fer indiquées dans la Convention et Cahier des Charges échangés en date du 5 Mars/20 Février 1903 (1318) entre le Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman et la Société du Chemin de fer Ottoman d'Anatolie, conformément aux stipulations de la dite Convention et Cahier des Charges. La Société pourra aussi s'intéresser par achat de titres à des Sociétés nouvelles ou déjà existantes de construction et d'exploitation de chemins de fer dans l'Empire Ottoman.

ARTICLE 2.—La Société prend la dénomination de :

Société Impériale Ottomane du Chemin de fer de Bagdad et sera soumise aux lois et règlements de l'Empire en qualité de Société Ottomane.

ARTICLE 3.—La Société a son siège à Constantinople, et pourra établir des succursales dans toute autre ville de l'Empire Ottoman ou à l'étranger.

ARTICLE 4.—La durée de la Société est fixée à 99 années, sauf le cas de dissolution anticipée ou de prorogation. Cette durée sera prolongée conformément à l'Art. 2 de la Convention en date du 5 Mars/20 Février 1903 (1318).

ARTICLE 5. — La Société du Chemin de fer Ottoman d'Anatolie apporte à la nouvelle Société, la concession qui lui a été octroyée par le Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman, avec tous les droits, privilèges et avantages y attachés ou en dérivant, et la nouvelle Société devient titulaire et propriétaire de la dite Concession et se trouve substituée à tous les droits et obligations du Concessionnaire. Toutefois, la Société du Chemin de fer Ottoman d'Anatolie garde pour son propre compte exclusif les droits et obligations qui ne regardent que les anciennes lignes et notamment ceux de ces droits et obligations qui découlent des Articles 2, 33 et 37 de la Convention du 5 Mars/20 Février 1903 (1318). Remise sera faite par la Société du Chemin de fer Ottoman d'Anatolie à la nouvelle Société des Firman, Conventions, actes et documents quelconques concernant la Concession.

ARTICLE 6.—Le fonds social se compose du capital-actions et des obligations qui seront émises ultérieurement selon les besoins résultant de l'application des clauses et conditions des actes de concession. Le capital-actions initial de la Société est de Francs : 15 000 000.—, soit Mark : 12 240 000.—, soit Livres Sterling : 600 000.— divisé en 30 000 Actions au montant nominal de Francs : 500.—, soit Mark : 408.—, soit Livres Sterling : 20.—, chacune. Le capital-actions pourra être augmenté de 50% par l'Assemblée Générale.

La Société du Chemin de fer Ottoman d'Anatolie souscrira 10% du capital-actions ; ces actions seront inaliénables et la Société du Chemin de fer Ottoman d'Anatolie ne pourra pas s'en dessaisir sans le consentement du Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman.

Le Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman aura aussi le droit de souscrire jusqu'à concurrence de 10% du capital-actions.

ARTICLE 20.—Le Conseil d'Administration a les pouvoirs les plus étendus pour l'administration des biens et affaires de la Société ; il peut même transiger et compromettre, il arrête les comptes qui doivent être soumis à l'Assemblée Générale et propose les répartitions de dividende.

Le Président du Conseil d'Administration représente, soit personnellement, soit par un mandataire, la Société en justice tant en demandant qu'en défendant.

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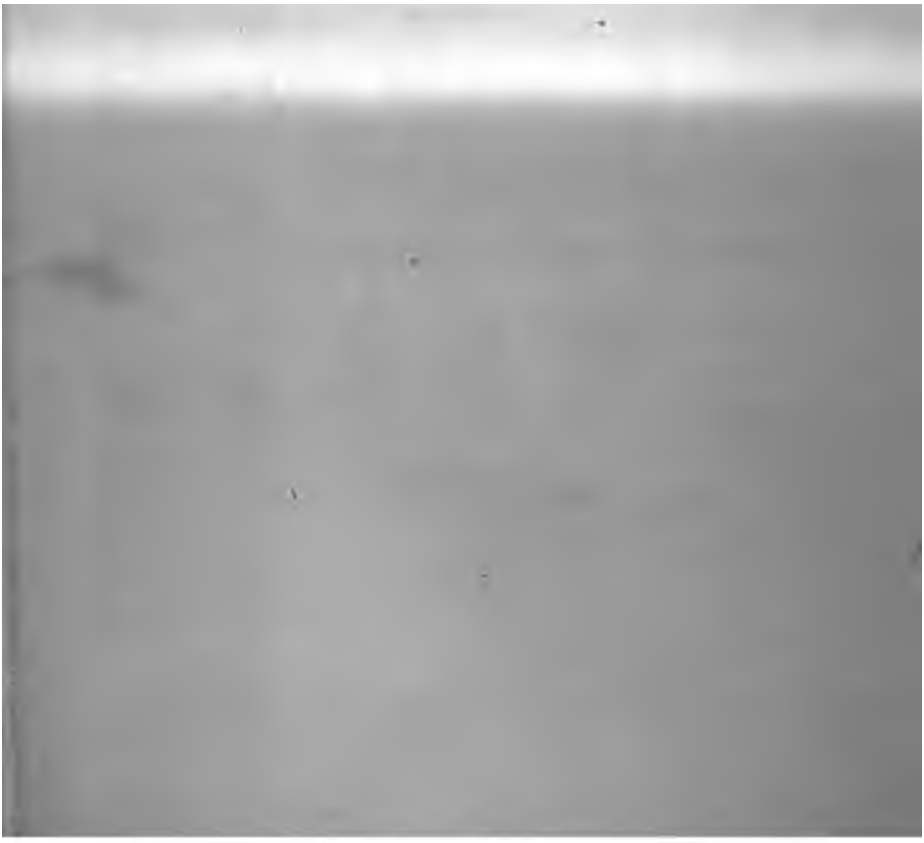

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